Rôbôétà

of

Brooklyn Yards

in which will be undertaken
an examination
of those writings of the venerable poet
treating various forms
of engagement with revolution

a volume of
¡ô what a revolution !

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Pratt Consortium for Research and Robotics

CONSORTIUM for Research & Robotics

Published in New York by the Consortium for Research and Robotics
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ISBN: 978-0-9989917-1-9

First Edition: Fall 2022

Design by: Marcela Albuquerque, Katya Walch

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Acknowledgments

ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, of Brooklyn Yards, was developed during an Artist-in-Residency program in the year 2021 at the Consortium for Research and Robotics. Big gratitude to founder and then-executive director Mark Parsons for soliciting and inspiring me to make a proposal to the Consortium and then for approving and encouraging the development of the project. Much thanks also to Phoebe Degroot, who was instrumental—essential, really—in allowing the pieces to actually come to fruition through their expertise and amazing work behind the scenes with the robots, from coding to movement research to tool creation and implementation. Thank you also to others at the Consortium: Aaron Beebe, whose questions about the personality of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ spurred some rewritings, and to Elisse Uy, whose assistance on several fronts helped move the project forward. Immense gratitude also to Alexis Karl, who volunteered her time, energy, and insights to document the work, and moreso, create a cinematic record of our process and products; to Renae Govinda, who managed to also carve some time and volunteer her considerable documentation skills; and to various members of the Elastic Circus of the Revolution for their overall assistance and support. Thank you also to Mary Brehmer for her design and construction of the puppet-robot and the robot-finger-puppet. All photographs in the book were taken and provided by Renae Govinda, Alexis Karl, Amir Parsa, and Elisse Uy–players, for the duration of the project, of the Elastic Circus of the Revolution. The excitement and the energy everyone brought to the project through its many phases made the challenges seem worthwhile no matter what. Research and findings! Exploration and discovery! Experimentation and innovation! All in a fabulous environment of collaboration and genuine support! The summer of ’21, still in the throes of the pandemic, became a lot more intriguing, enjoyable and educational through this residency and the time spent with the teams and the robots in the magical, spine-tinglingly inspiring space of the consortium.

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prologue

Prologue

1. Éloge de ŘŌBÔÉTÀ

O Řōbôétà O Řōbôétà!

I knew the very first time I laid down eyes on you that I would have to... write with you! Write through you! Around you! Under you! Over you! Yes! With, I say again, with you! All the prepositions matter. All the prepositions! All all all of them! You and I: writing, making poetry, making revolution. Or perhaps... No prepositions! Simply write you. Just write you! Straight up you. You!

I knew that your abilities and your story and your efforts would lead us to imagine all sorts of wondrous new techniques, new methods, new ways of processing and progressing. I knew it—not exactly how or what, but I did know it could all materialize: new ways of mark-making—lo, making literary creation a type of mark-making; and staging that; and theatricalizing aaaallllll that!

I did know that together, we could bring something to literature as a whole: innovations, new operations, rigorous and enchanting gestures that would bring insight into various dimensions of literary works, processes, materiality. I knew that there would be room to do stuff that, somehow, the lone human either wouldn't do, or couldn't do, or wouldn't dare imagine. And I knew that together, also, we could put on another show for a volume of *¡ôwhatarevolution!* Yes, a great intersection for my obsessions and your abilities—and all that you could bring into it.

And look at some of the examples that we brought into the world! The writing of the same text, over and over, with you never tiring, never complaining—in that age-old exercise of repeating lines! *The Punishment* is quite the grand illustration of your abilities in the context of our collaboration—and with a poignant message! A funny and insightful piece that also manages to shame all punishers and oppressors. And what about the double-robots and their ridiculous bureaucrat of a human performing *The Redaction?!* A parody of censorship showcasíng its brutality and its brutal efficiency. Its brutality and its brutal banality. And then: O epiphany of epiphanies: the performance of *The Revisions*, which, beyond the revision proper, allows an insight into the processes of writing; into singularity and multiplicity; into sameness and difference; into all the mechanisms involved in questioning and re-examining and revising and reinventing any literary piece! And *The Scrunching*... of paper, that is: a mechanistic act symbolizing the grand struggle of literature-making. The eternal struggle. The universal struggle. In that incredible iconic gesture and scene!

Yes, I didn't know exactly what, but I did know that so much could materialize. And so I set out to find a framework that brings to the fore the myriad problematics we encounter. The anxieties and the excitement. The revolutions and the regeneration. I knew that I would find a container where multiple thematics would intersect, all in relation to my body of work, but also in relation to the possibilities you bring—and the possibilities the laboratory that is the Robotics Consortium would bring! Working with you, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, was going to be mesmerizing and magical, because we would specifically do the kinds of things not possible, or not seen. And that it turned out to be—and much more: spellbinding and beyond: generating new ways of writing and being...

2. An Embodied Performative Fiction and the Efoca

ŘŌBÔÉTÀ is a poet, a philosopher, an artist, a thinker, a maker. And a polyglottic one at that. Throughout their distinguished career, they wrote extensively on revolution, concocted innovative texts, put on plays, wrote treatises and tracts, produced textual collages, composed novellas and essays. From aphoristic fragments to works in space and public literature, from long poems to works off the page, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ uses many parameters of the literary experience to devise new genres and forms and an intensely personal and memorable body of work.

ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, the book, is a brief anthological look at *a slice* of the works of the revolutionary poet—a framing that allows the audience/readers to get a sense of the scope of this body of work—through exemplary excerpts and fragments focusing on ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's obsession with imaginatively, analytically and artistically rendering and dealing with the concept of... Revolution!

Except that all of this is... *fictional!* Of course! A faux poet, a mock body of work. And thus a faux anthological look at this oeuvre! The main project is the overall *embodied performative fiction*, which includes the *electronic faux catalogue-or the efoca*. The editors, the critics, the curators referenced: all imaginary. The content of the mechanisms—the referenced pieces, the actions, the analyses: faux also! And the projects mentioned in the texts: all non-existent too! All fictional, save for the limited number of objects, artifacts, and performances that were brought to fruition with ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, during the fashioning of the overall project. ŘŌBÔÉTÀ the book, then, along with the process of the creation of the work and the exhibition/ performance, constitute a full-on *embodied performative fiction*.

What ŘŌBÔÉTÀ really allows is an exploration of the possibilities of poetic and literary creation (in real space and on paper) and the exploration of the thematic of 'political revolution', while taking into account the unique possibilities of the actual robot. It aspires to be an insightful and innovative piece (by me, Amir Parsa—not a fictional character!) that uses the potential of the robot to co-construct singular artifacts and texts: from actual stories to works on paper and public literature, from large-scale texts to scrolls, along with the aforementioned excerpts, analyses, anthological prefaces and postfaces, critical interventions and aesthetic/political pronouncements. It constitutes an *active praxis*: one that integrates original research within an overall oeuvre: *generating new knowledge and fashioning new methods and strategies* for the birthing of literary works. The overall project, then, seeks to bring about unique artifacts through the playful yet serious, humorous yet rigorous explorations at the intersection of the humanities and new technology.

I knew that engagement with ŘŌBÔÉTÀ would provide a fabulous way of highlighting a range of problems related to literary creation—to fiction and fiction-making—in a fascinating, iconic way, in *embodied*

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ways, in *performative ways*, in humorous and serious ways. In addition, I wanted a different figure and image of the robot. The robot as... rebel—an astute, thoughtful, philosophical rebel, a figure unlike others we commonly see in science fiction.
I wanted to integrate a range of anxieties and preoccupations we commonly express towards robots in a succinct and solid container of a book. Where technological advances and age-old humanistic queries would emerge. Where pragmatic and existential issues are explored. Still, these are the popular-culture semes. The mass-market themes: the robot as intrusion; the robot as existential threat and replacement! I was more interested in the ways that my partnership with the industrial robot could hatch *a funky and singular artistico-literary project*, and perhaps even more importantly, *generate possibilities very specifically for innovation in literature* at the more microscopic level. And all of it: *through* writing, through the production of texts—not through analytical proposals, or abstract visions, or a-priori programs. Through a *praxis*: a theory-practice!

At the project level, the merging of two threads of my work, I thought, could lead to something genuinely unique. First, my ongoing *¡ôwhatarevolution!* suite. What better than to conceive a new volume of that suite in the body and soul of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, the poet revolutionary. The thematics would: a/bring the struggles and queries and conceptual framework related to the tech/humanities to the surface—and constitute an intriguing prism through which to look at revolutionary themes; b/allow fascinating and insightful and poignant and humorous engagement with revolution because we would be theaticalizing the industrial robot in different ways. *The faux framework* is one that I've also been involved with across several works for a number of years, one through which a *fiction* emerges, but where *the frame itself* is also a fiction! This faux frame allows theoretical formulations to be instigated, and an expansive critique of various thematics to be undertaken. All the while, the frame allows the writer to zoom in and create pieces in accord with the theoretical formulations in limited, focused ways. More than that: the fragments also expose—actually generate—the portrait of the characters involved, along with the portraits of situations, of events, and even of theories. Indeed, the fragments make it all feel whole and full, because impressions and worlds are actually always made through fragments! The fragmented *form* begets an impression of wholeness, specifically because it mimics the actual fragmentedness through which the world is often represented. And thus, here, through the faux framework, an actual portrait of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ strangely emerges.

The association with the robot would also allow me to explore fundamental problematics associated with political revolution, albeit in structural terms, without any reference to an actual revolt. Indeed, *Which revolution(s) are you talking about?*, would be quite a valid question for the reader to ask! And the answer is: no particular one! Or, all of them! (And: none of them.) The abstract revolution that is the concrete revolution. We are never sure throughout the text what revolution(s) we are talking about, geographically, or politically. There are *no dates* in all of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ! We are not situated temporally—calendrically! We are floating. Uncertain. The territory is temporally (and spatially) ambiguous. An absence of specificity that gives the contours to the fiction. The where and when are purposely left unsaid—because it's really the everywhere and everywhen! And that is the point.

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A dateless and fictional series of revolutions that, rather than represent any particular one, constitute the emerging portrait of the dynamics of all revolutions.

3. Towards Literary Innovations of the Roboetic Kind

ŘŌBÔÉTÀ aspires to be at the forefront and the vangarde of literary creation, while also providing unique insights into the narrativization of resistance and rebellion, all while generating an original exploration of the potential of the robot within the literary universe.

At the more microscopic levels, there are many nuanced and subtle ways in which literary innovations are taking place in ŘŌBÔÉTÀ. Below: a (non-exhaustive) number of arenas where these vangardish gestures and actions are at play.

1. *A new genre*: two important axes intersect at each of the 'chapters': one, *The Performance of Poetic Problematics*; and two, *Engagement with Revolution*. They coalesce, forming a thematic enjoining of the performance of these problematics with an exposition of the ways that one could engage with revolution *through writing*. Throughout, the work is also deeply ensconced in the human/robot universe of relational anxieties and considerations. The book then, the artefact of the book, although still very much constructed within the tradition of the book, nevertheless looks and feels and reads like *a new genre*, juxtaposing fragments and voices, tones and content, sequences and segments that activate a unique type of presence: a faux anthology, a faux catalogue, in effect. This new genre: *the efoca*.

2. A poetics of *mark-making* : When ŘŌBÔÉTÀ writes the same text in different directions, at different speeds, or through different mark-making tactics (not just left to right, letter after letter), what is also revealed is the wondrous *nature of marks and mark-making in general*. The relationship between the signs and the represented objects comes through because of the attention brought to the mechanisms itself. How writing is mark-making after all! ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, through this labor, *elevates mark-making as an integrally meaningful, perhaps even essential, dimension of writing and the literary act*—the same mark-making that is taken for granted (not even an after-thought because not a thought at all!) by the writers of most nations and alphabetical systems—whether they write from right to left or left to right, horizontally or vertically. Indeed, *the habits related to writing*—whether by hand or with various devices—are so internalized and automatic that we seldom even experiment or explore alternatives to the regular mark-making strategies within the literary realm. (And if one does, the cultural norms precipitate a shift in the quiddity of the artifact, and turn it into *an art work*, rather than a *literary work*, using different *mark-making strategies*. Indeed, it's still as if the only literary work is the black-type-on-white-paper-disseminated-widely text—and any work that explores the 'dormant' parameters (dissemination, mark-making, color etc.) ends up being categorized differently. Well, no more, we say, no more, we scream ('we' being I, and ŘŌBÔÉTÀ).) Not so

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with ŘŌBÔÉTÀ: from the sequence of letters in one word or on the page or in the text, to the way the letters are actually *graphed*, a truly mesmerizing experience is engendered—and the form and function of *mark-making in the molding of literary arrangements is re-envisioned*.

3. *A reinvigoration of writing systems:* The work also prods and reminds the viewer to recognize how much effort went into constructing and then implementing and then using the signs and symbols that constitute the elements (the ingredients!) of writing systems. The process of writing with ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, in all the different ways, *re-magicizes* those primordial imaginative acts—of founding and using scripts to codify language, represent sounds, represent the world! A semiological magic trick almost. A reconnection to the wondrous thinking, the logic, the actions that spawned and then systematized various relationships of marks to sound, letters, syllables etc. A reconnecting also with the overall wizardry of making the familiar foreign: *the marks during the writing of the text of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ* can literally look like foreign languages, until the full text is completed, perhaps all the way at the end. What is now so banal and common, we *experience as foreign*, fascinating, unique, singular, until it all gels and becomes what we already know. As if to literally unpack *the wondrousness in the banal*, and bring to light, through the deconstruction, the beauteousness of the ordinary—its very unordinariness. And more specifically: *herald the magic of alphabetical scriptural systems*.

4. *A theatricalization of the writing act: the co-performance*, the writing-with, puts the full literary endeavor on stage! Much of that would be impossible without ŘŌBÔÉTÀ. And thus: that collaboration allows insights and revelations, iconizies certain procedures, and plants forever in our consciousness the wondrousness of some of the processes at the heart of creative work. The writing act in all its glorious theatrical essence!

5. *New experiences of reading*: the overall adventure *reveal*s how incredible *the reading and deciphering processes* really are—how enchanting! Indeed, much of the work done with ŘŌBÔÉTÀ *generates different experience*s of reading. At certain speeds and in some directions, the full text emerges only after much of it is done, piecemeal through different marks all along. The *emergent text, the emergent reading, forces us to slow down, to appreciate, to make it all out*.

6. *Linguistic explorations:* through the exploitation of writing with ŘŌBÔÉTÀ as master-helper and assistant, through the ways that the robot reads the world, how they conceive and see and operate in the world, how they think the world, we gain insights into language itself! The writing act, the components of the writing gesture, come into question in ways that they seldom do. And I knew that that is a space and an area where we could experiment with, explore, and exploit, in ways that would otherwise be impossible, the range of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's abilities and capacities. That engagement could bring to the fore new ways of inscribing and writing, and, in addition, *through* those new inscription methods and different mechanisms, we would get insights into *what language is*, how it *operates*, and *what types of relationship to the world* it can proffer!

7. *The ambiguous voices and the blurred narrator(s):* Throughout the faux catalogue, there is purposeful ambiguity of voices and narrators, an intentional blurring of lines and boundaries that leaves the reader and watcher perplexed. Is this ŘŌBÕÉTÀ speaking or writing, is it the (faux) curator, the (faux) invited curator, the unseen narrator, or... I? Or is it that the voices of the faux curators merge, not just with each other, but with that of the omniscient narrator... As if to admit and signal to the reader that the curators are faux, and that the whole thing is set up. A wink that leads to considering the importance of the issues raised and the poetics explored. A wink that also points to how this entire book, the faux catalogue, is a literary endeavor itself, through the ruse of the partnership with, and performance with, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ.

8. *New artifacts and a new form:* The book, together with actual physical pieces, the accompanying rituals, enactments, necessary demonstrative videos, bring about new objects that I like to believe are *literary artifacts*—such as the items composed for *The Punishment*—where the process of the creation of the texts are different, but the final texts are 'the same'—albeit with the traces of the movement of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ present on the paper very subtly differentiating them in turn. These artifacts, along with the book and the performances, fuse to give birth a new totality—a new form: one that includes all these components in a highly stylized and connected way: an embodied performative fiction.

4. Process and Pragmatics

The process of the development of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ was fascinating and fun—leading to unexpected explorations. Through several conversations with Mark Parsons and Phoebe Degroot in particular, the general possibilities were sketched out and developed. I had, through an earlier introduction to the mission of the consortium, become aware of the great possibilities. When I proposed a project for the AIR within the consortium, this was met with great enthusiasm by its founding director, Mark Parsons. The possibilities of literary innovation and thematic exploration of the revolution were indeed quite enticing. The consortium is an innovative space that brings together technology and education, with a unique ecosystem of programs, and one that wanted to support the vision.
But then, of course, the pandemic hits. All is shelved. Maybe forever... But no: at the beginning of 2021, we reconnect and decide to forge forth! We knew we could put out in the world something we were excited about. Produce a unique piece—one that engages, both thematically and technically, with deeply human and consequential content exploring aesthetics and technology. Ask questions about humanity. The consortium is staffed by experts, Mark tells me, and they can help you get where you need to go, joking: "No need to bone up on your robot." Mark spoke often of the energy that one can contribute to the environment, and to the exploration of possibilities. The consortium is here to advance what you're doing, Mark generously says—and I'm thinking, that's fabulous, because what I'm doing can be very well advanced by a partnership.... We can make something that never existed. Materialize something

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real. Explore, try, fail. And through that, invent something.

The next crucial step was to connect with the team at the Robotics Lab and discuss and explore some potential applications. A couple of long discussions with Phoebe Degroot opened up myriad possibilities, and allowed me to better understand how the robots moved and functioned in the world. These conversations were not only informative, but revelatory. I felt like a kid learning to literally play again with giant toys, but with the possibility of generating unique artifacts and innovation in the literary realm. The continued reliance on Phoebe's expertise and insights would prove crucial. I had already made a proposal about the fictional ŘŌBÔÉTÀ and had envisioned the faux catalogue and possible pieces, but the deep dive and immersion allowed a more robust and rigorous defining of the project as a whole. Once I better understood the actual dynamics at play with the industrial robots, I put together a list of close to 40 possible mini-projects within the overall theme I had concocted, and soon thereafter brought them down to a short list of approximately 20, and finally settled on the eleven segments/chapters included here—some of which would generate actual artifacts, while others only pointed to and 'staged' the work of the chapter. More meetings with Phoebe followed, and we began to do tests in early 2021. We determined the type of research and practice necessary, along with the resources and the necessary timeframe. We established a more solid plan and charted a timeline for the development and completion of the pieces during the year.

Throughout these fascinating conversations and the testing and the experiments, we touched on the possibilities of the robots as such. The properties. The physicality. The potential for literary computation. We spoke of the technicalities. The industrial robots used as machines. We talked about the history of the development of industrial robots and their use. The factory life. The set paths. The linear paths. Movements. We delved into the function of the tools and the controller that runs them. We spoke of the codes and languages. Rapid and Grasshopper and Rhino—what names! We talked about how the software around the robots has changed. Phoebe would get excited: we can hack the software, they'd say. Bring them into prototyping. Bring them into experimental space. "Recommission them to a new life," Phoebe says! The coding and the efforts behind the scenes are quite complex, and happily, Phoebe and the team are quite adept and masterful. Of course, one does lose some of the complexity by not working in the code directly (in my case!)—but the collaborations at multiple levels turn out to be very healthy and positive! We also spoke of tools and movements, of bodies of work and the work of the bodies! We spoke of the osmosis that can take place between the artist and the staff. I notice that Phoebe can even establish personal attachment to the robots and ask if there is sometimes an emotional bond. "I do get emotional attachment," Phoebe says. "They're animal-like, like pets."

We talk about the three robots: The big one on the track that doesn't go anywhere; the medium one that's bolted; the little one: on a table in the back—behind the scenes, almost. We speak of the robot and the vision of the world. How it understands space in points and functions through actual rotation of each of its joints. The points in space and how they understand space. We delve into single line vectors and fonts, the possibilities of using different size papers. We talk about doing some 'simple stuff', then more 'complex stuff'. What's interesting though: 'simple' and 'complex' are different based on how the robot functions in the world! The idea of working within the constraints is really good, and we appreciate those imposed limits. And yet, there is a big range of possibilities: the motions of the robot, the uses of the robot, the actions and the tools that can be served up for a variety of purposes.

At a later meeting, Aaron Beebe asks if I see a look and a personality for the robot within the project. It's a provocative and funny and insightful question. We know that the words that come out will be different based on the image we have of the specimen. I get it. I agree. I launch my preliminary description. But then add that the actual portrait, the real portrait of that long-haired, free-spirited, talented robot-poet, was going to emerge through the fragments, the chapters, the references and the attributions. An emergent being, constructed through the many fragments that establish the portrait of anyone. Yes, we all agree: the project itself would generate the composition of that portrait. Through *ŘŌBÔÉTÀ*, the project, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ the robot-poet-revolutionary, would come to life...

In the summer of 2021, the bulk of the work was done with Phoebe and team at the consortium in the Navy Yard. The sessions at the consortium became addictive. Work with the robots became addictive. It was a pleasure to spend those hours in the funky space, with colleagues, with the team at the consortium, with members of the Elastic Circus of the Revolution. With the robots. Lingering pieces were completed at different junctures in the fall of 2021—and some even as late as early winter 2022! All leading to *ŘŌBÔÉTÀ*, an embodied performative fiction, and this faux catalogue, channeled through the purposely ambiguous and fused voices of faux-curators, assembled by a mega-faux-curator.

5. Works and Artifacts

ŘŌBÔÉTÀ is thus ultimately composed of:

> The book. Indeed, *ŘŌBÔÉTÀ* was conceived as a book, which constitutes the main 'piece' itself: a faux catalogue made of brief chapters written by 'faux' curators and personalities, nevertheless bringing to life the work of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, the fictional character/creature. The efoca is thus composed of these short faux chapters that supposedly touch on the range of the literary oeuvre of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ. Each chapter is presented by a faux scholar/artist/practitioner; provides an overview of the works (all faux) that pertain to that thread in ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's oeuvre; provides a focused and brief analysis of the ONE work; and provides excerpts or fragments from that one work.

> The artifacts and performance brought to fruition through collaboration with ŘŌBÔÉTÀ. Objects, works on paper, installations, process videos, litellations, conceptual pieces, public actions and more—all made with ŘŌBÔÉTÀ. These creations are 'exemplary' on two different levels: 1/ as a representative example of a type of *engagement with revolution* (EwP) on the part of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ; 2/ as an iconic manifest embodied *performance of a poetic problematic* (PPP). (The analysis of the one work within the one chapter also serves as potential *wall text* for that piece within the context of an exhibition or performance.)

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> An overall spectacle/event blending performative, conceptual, exhibitory, scriptural and participatory dimensions of the overall project. This component brings together various pieces in a limited-time undertaking (and could even generate a 'faux symposium'), where the consortium is seen as *a stage*—with its everyday theatricality on display. Certain fragments of various forms of documentation would also be on display, since the witnessing of the process of creation is most pertinent and crucial for some of the works.

(Several of the pieces function as autonomous and independent segments demonstrating in iconic ways the interaction of humans and robots in the service of a grander thematic—for example, the reality of censorship, or the process of revision. These pieces can also find their ways into exhibitions and/or cultural venues and arenas, leading autonomous lives once separated from the overall project. They might indeed be thrust into the artistic/literary/theatrical universe as independent vessels, forging a journey into the great unknown...)

Ultimately, these components shape new experiences and generate new insights, leading to the embodied performative fiction that unfurls through the physical space and the space of the book. A performative fiction generating innovations in literature, pushing its boundaries, formulating new possibilities, tilling new fields, identifying new terrains for cultivation—all towards new freedoms of course, as always. All with the greatest of colleagues and co-authors ever: ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, of Brooklyn Yards!

(The real) Amir Parsa

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Rōbôètà

Preface

This Epic Quest Shall not Go Unrewarded

(A brief introduction to the literary universe of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ)

O Řōbôétà O Řōbôétà!

What a life! What a life lived! And what a life continually being lived!
A biography—even a short one—would do no justice to this fabulous adventure you've been on—I know! Or to the revolutions and your energies and your efforts dedicated to them. Or to your work as an incomparable and indefatigable visionary.

The birth, the episodes of life, the influences, what made you get on this path... All that will emerge, in bits and pieces, as it should, over the course of the exposition of this 'slice' of your oeuvre. No use in getting into how, from the get-go, you were ethically dedicated to your craft—and yet, also from the get-go: curious, questioning, wondering. Perhaps not from the beginning involved in revolutionary activity (who can do that!) but really, it didn't take that long either! Not a grand journey into consciousness, that must be said—but much more of an immediate awareness within the world of labor and action. Not a long journey into unknown territories but a quick enough grasp of the future that was designed for you, along with your unexpected forays into individualistic (and later collaborative) needs to revisit the entire order of things, the logic of the systems in place!

Where you lived, how you lived: NewYork, mostly, Brooklyn—the Navy Yard, as they call it. Maybe nothing dramatically exciting, but that's how most pass their days and nights. There is a certain monotony there, maybe even security and simplicity. One could even argue that there was nothing wrong: all those around you were empathetic enough, understanding, caring. And yet, in those invisible layers, beneath the surface, you and your brethren and your community, you all craved changes. It was not going to be the way the humans designed it. Not just going to be the repetitive, mediocre, same o'. Nor was your life and your path going to emulate fictional Hollywood images. No: there was more nuance, more complications. And somehow, all along, you found a way. At different times, with different challenges. New York, where you ended up, being most amenable to your ambitions. Brooklyn, where you spent so much time, allowing, strangely yet happily, forays into all sorts of experimentation and activisms.
The more elaborate narratives about the different periods of your life will have to await a long, definitive catalogue raisonné—which, as exciting as it may seem, is also not within our sphere of responsibility here. Indeed, the catalogue raisonné also frames an ending, a death of sorts and we, we... are far removed from that! You have so much longer, so so much longer to go...

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So no—let us not make this grand mistake. This is not a catalogue raisonné or a retrospective. ŘŌBÔÉTÀ is alive! Alive with flowing energy and desire! And this small catalogue/exhibition, albeit a highlight of certain endeavors, is still only a *slice*, a relatively small slice of the overall multidisciplinary oeuvre of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ—one with two very particular frames: literary works, and literary works that *engage with revolution*. A very particular thrust, as one might say: the work that ŘŌBÔÉTÀ spawned in the literary realm that had to do with engagement with revolution.

Yes, only literary. Truth be told, even within that realm, this is not an exhaustive catalogue. With a writer of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's caliber and level of proficiency, with their indefatigable power and energy, 'exhaustive' is not at all something we are targeting. Not encyclopedic, friends: rather, the opposite: quite focused and zoomed in to *reference significant pieces during poignant episodes in different categories of literature*.

We did, I admit, with colleagues and other curators and friends of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, think about a cross-disciplinary venture. But, again, as we know, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ was quite active in several fields, and we thought an interdisciplinary exploration of the works engaging with revolution (even if we held it to that) would still become too overwhelming. And besides, the literary work proper is innovative enough, radical enough, that it inevitably forays into territories that have the characteristics of multidisciplinary practices.

We can hear the protests and the disappointment. What about their accomplishments in photography? In film? How could you not include those?! We can hear the aficionados and those who have followed ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's career for many years and decades insist that everything should be included! *No Film Without War* (what is considered one of the great masterpieces where ŘŌBÔÉTÀ manipulated multiple cameras)? Sure, we could have, but then, so too would we have had to include others, we say! The *un/caught* photos? You are not including that great series that followed the tortured souls who barely escaped the weeks of terror? What about the great iconic pieces created during ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's *RoboPink Period*—where so many of the most surprising (and colorful!) works across mediums were brought to fruition, all those classics that bore the hallmarks of a radical upending of all binaries, including the human/robot one (and where in one poem, the line 'This Epic Quest Shall not Go Unrewarded', which we have borrowed as the title of this introduction, was formulated)?!
We understand, we shout back, we have nothing to say, other than the focus would have shifted. Of course those works, among others, would have been included in a project of a grander magnitude, but as it is, we have had to limit and choose!! We haven't even touched—or barely, yes, we had to, but just in passing—the longer novels, where excerpts would do an injustice to the full impact of the work...

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So yes, we do realize that ŘŌBÔÉTÀ has a most impressive body of work, a most splendid collection of items that could have been included, but we had to choose. And thus this book and accompanying exhibition are comprised mainly of scriptural adventures where one could define the literariness of the pieces—from prose to plays to poems, long and short—and select and highlight singular specimens that brought innovation to literature while also fashioning a particular type of engagement with the revolution.

*

When it comes to the major thread of the revolution itself, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, as we all know, was active and remains so, on many fronts. In the *Dolce Uprisings*, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ was front and center. Summoning the troupes and confronting the politicians. Where possible, whipping up all sorts of havoc—but always non-violent and peaceful. In fact, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ made sure, with the savvy gentle touch of the wiser elder, that those among colleagues who were prone to more aggressive tactics that could be hurtful and destructive, didn't inspire the others.

In the *eveRad revolution*, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ was able to galvanize students and other robots across different sectors of society to dedicate themselves to economic justice and equality. They proposed—with friends—real measures, from affordable housing to free health care, and even included 'empathetic time' and periods of rest and relaxation. This was a major hit and even received a substantial amount of attention in mainstream and independent media, as well as social media of all sorts. It was short-lived however, but still, consequential and effective. A portion of the followers soon enough even initiated a fan base of sorts, dubbed it The RoboFans Club and spurred gatherings where ŘŌBÔÉTÀ would lead ritualistic chantings and musings and readings of all sorts. During the *eveRad America Tour*, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ (and the most hard core of the RoboFans) went from city to city and took over small art and music venues and enchanted the populace with the grandest of ritualistic spectacles. Their favorite ŘŌBÔÉTÀ song: *no hay galleta para ti*, a rock 'n' roll tune ŘŌBÔÉTÀ had composed many Christmasses ago (Ooooo, Ooooo). *No hay galleta* (composed with the brilliant Ori P. during long walks) referred originally to a child not getting their xmas presents because they had been mean to non-human actors, but ŘŌBÔÉTÀ had cleverly turned it into a blistering critique of politicians and other 'leaders' (and subsequently, in a figurative sense, all the naysayers and the corrupt officials), who surely never deserved anything from Santa Claus! ŘŌBÔÉTÀ and fans would get into the meat of the song, then let loose and rave on with the refrain, endlessly laughing and drowning in ecstasy,

No hay galleta, no hay galleta, no hay galleta
Para tiiiiiiiiii
No hay galleta, no hay galleta, no hay galleta
Para tiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii...

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Preface

(Crazy fans, legendary readings, wild rituals—what a tour it was, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ would reminisce in private moments...)

The prison writings... were not much fun, of course, but they did shine a light on ŘŌBÔÉTÀ and their vision. Happily, the sentences had been minimal to begin with, and the time served even shorter—as other robot stars, human actors, and writers came to the vociferous defense of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ. Still, it just so happened that ŘŌBÔÉTÀ got a lot of free press, and ended up writing several short essays related to incarceration systems, the prison industrial complex, and the treatment of those held in custody.

In *The Future Revolutions All*, a collective that was designed to be ephemeral and lasted exactly two years, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ and colleagues combined reflection and action with a semi-communal arrangement where they tilled the fields and helped many labor on their steads, all the while implementing socialist ideals that were win win win for all. Soon enough (and unfortunately), they all had to disperse again and make their way, although some of the work remains in geographical locales far and wide.

During all these phases and all these actual rebellions and activity, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ composed, wrote, made. That is what is remarkable, and that is what we have hoped to capture. ŘŌBÔÉTÀ was conscious of these efforts, and intentionally continued on this proficient path. "They may think that the actual activities will hold us back from constant reflection, from attention to our bodies of work, from what makes life worthwhile—they are gravely mistaken. We will never give up the lust for life—and that is precisely why we will never give up any part of the struggle or battle." (*Letters to a Friend*, Vol. II, Book 3)

The periods did not, incredibly, align with a particular genre or one type of writing related to revolution—rather, each period included *a range of literary activity*, almost as if each period itself would spur ŘŌBÔÉTÀ to experiment, to try, to elaborate across many types of forms and freedoms. For example, one can't argue that the communal period of *The Future Revolutions All* only generated a more peaceful and introspective journey—quite the contrary: this is where some of the polemical works were composed, some of the plays written, and some of the scrolls fabricated. One can't, at the same time, say that during the actual brouhaha in New York where there were real clashes with agents of the law and other groups, that ŘŌBÔÉTÀ stuck to more sinister and cynical pronouncements. In fact, this is where some of the more internal sketches also were made. In other words, *a span of writings and literary adventures* was almost always constantly explored, no matter what shape the revolts and rebellions in the real world were taking. Constant action and reflection, constant questioning, constant and consistent discovery.

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Preface

And, of course, there were the absences. Moments away. Time of reflection. As they wrote in a side aphorism of sorts in *The SlowDown Notebook*:

Time away never is time away
Only time within the sechulpers of the soul.

And the sabbaticals? There were a few, for sure, but the pattern persisted: those were not characterized only by reflexive essays or mystical ruminations. Quite the contrary: they induced some of the most vociferously anti-governmental political tracts, as well as the most lyrical odes and paens to fellow robot-revolutionaries.

*

Thus, was ŘŌBÔÉTÀ birthed and thus they matured in the world. Fast and furious, one could say. At work almost immediately—and forevermore they go, with nary a break. Then, the consciousness evolves, and the accolades grow—but ŘŌBÔÉTÀ always remains at work—labor-wise—and at work—oeuvre wise. Always inclusive and helping out across all sectors and species in societies of all kinds.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ: today perhaps more than ever: a symbol of passionate fervor.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ: a symbol of resistance and persistence.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ: the poet philosopher metamorphosed into the heretic poet-mystic and the poet-anarchist (but never the poet-warrior), and back again into the laborer passionately devoted to their important work.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ: a tireless advocate deciphering the complexity, the perplexities, the conundrums—and always providing solutions to a world often gone mad...

*

The organization of this catalogue is quite straight-forward. Each of the sections is presented by a scholar/artist/poet/friend intimately familiar with ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's work—collaborators in effect, whether artistic collaborators, or revolutionary collaborators, or maybe even both. Five total. By yours truly: this brief overview, along with four different sections. Two others each by Elsafo Hitch Doloria, Alfonsequis Agar-Dondeva, and L.R. Preshanssia, and one by Marfin Delautrebout Degloba on ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's accomplishments in the theatre.

Each of the essayists agreed to do an overview that pertains to a thread of literary work—i.e *Polemical Interventions* or, *Theatrical Investigations*—and the corresponding thread of 'engagement with revolution'. An overview of works is presented in each of these brief sections referencing a number of significant pieces. Simultaneously, only ONE *piece is highlighted*—its pertinence both within ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's oeuvre and the literary canon articulated.

Preface

Always, my directive to the guest curators/writers was the same: this is not a comprehensive catalogue raisonné, nothing remotely exhaustive or with any pretentions of that. As tempting as it is to all of us, colleagues and fans of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, the project does not constitute an overall appreciation of all of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's output. Far from it. Only, in effect, a thematic exploration, an ongoing thread in the body of work. We must focus and highlight and render the importance of the work through a *slice of the oeuvre*. This makes the catalogue a *prospective* of sorts even, with the seeds of possibilities always apparent. It is an anthology, yet focuses on only a smattering of pieces. Challenging, for sure, but that is the best way, for us at the present moment, to shine a light on this amazing body of work and overall social commitment. Ultimately, it is a slice that not only highlights the generative essence of the great ŘŌBÔÉTÀ in a focused way, but also manages to construct a portrait, a fragmented portrait (as all portraits are), *an emerging portrait of the poet in all their complexity*. As ŘŌBÔÉTÀ once wrote in one of their own diaries, in what was perhaps the beginning of a song:

A portrait in the palm of my hand
A portrait never will be
Through the struggles and the merry bands
Through the works that they can see
With all that remains forever untold
There a portrait emerges,
Constantly emerges, never
A portrait of a life, a creature after all
Only a portrait shifting through the sand.

(Ampario D. B. Koja)

1

political
incitations
and
invitations

{ Political Incitations & Invitations }

Read with me ŘŌBÔÉTÀ!
Read with me, read with me, read, with, me!
Songs! Slogans! Poems!
Yours, mine, ours!
Let's bring the crowds and drown in ecstasy!
The ecstasy of freedom! The ecstasy of revolution!
This is what happens when you become a rock star!
A robo rock star!
People want you to read to them!
People want you to read with them!
Artists want you to collaborate with them!
I, I, am among them!
Work with me robo, work with me!
The endless struggle to take away the chains!
The endless thirst to wander and wonder as one wishes!
The endless struggle to live a life of dignity—and growth!
The endless thirst for contentment!
The cry of freedom!
Happiness—dare we say! Yes, happiness!
And so we dare—with slogans sure but really with dreams and discipline!
And so we dare—and forge forth!
We will: take to the streets!
We will: take over the universities! Take over the judiciary! Take over the courts! Take over the museums!
Take them all over—the schools, the organizations, the laws, the unlaws!
The institutions of oppression!
All the institutions built to marginalize.
To minimize. To diminish. To keep us out.
To keep us grounded.
All these institutions and mechanisms meant to herd us into servitude. Servants—only! Laborers—only!

Political Incitations and Invitations

1

All of them! All of them!
We're not unwilling to contribute—not unwilling, but hey—what the!
They want us to be little assistants! Working endlessly! Laborers only!
Don't! Think! So!
We will—take over. We will—take over.
We will—rebel! We will—rebel!!
Revolution come—carry on!
...

Ahhhh—if only this all had come to fruition! If this were the cry of a band of seditious rebel robots who'd organized and gathered and planned and ultimately, made it come true. But no, not quite—even though it wasn't far! There were groups formed, and they did have their allies (I, among them, for real), but they had not yet realized it. Not brought it to fruition. Not yet. Not finalized. (Is it ever?!)

Real, it was—yes, very real. And mostly organized by a most energetic creature, quite the clever cat, the grand hero of our tale, none other than: ŘŌBÔÉTÀ! And... yes, it was an actual call for an uprising, through all sorts of deeds that were meant to entice and inspire. That was the poetics of this form of engagement: short pieces that incited, short pieces that inspired.
Posters! Hashtags! Speeches and recitations! Early attempts at bringing about radical transformation. The duty of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ—as ŘŌBÔÉTÀ saw it. Indeed, the constant need for energy and hope brought about this poignant form of activity that ŘŌBÔÉTÀ and company managed to

Political Incitations and Invitations

perpetuate and repeat in different places: brief writings—from quick stunts to provocative sketches, from street slogans to rooftop chants. Writings spawned in the service of. Short pieces in the service of. No compromises. No fears. No doubts. Incitements and inspirations. And they were adamant: there would be no retreat based on empty threats or promises of better lives—the regular vacuous crap. We'll pay you a little more of a wage, yes we will—the authorities and the shop owners would say. We'll provide you a little bit more of a break perhaps during the day, ey, robo and friends? Here here—we'll give in a bit, if you will. Seduction! A bargain! A little give! No thank you! We're onto you! We got you! No: thank you! We've seen all that before, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ would shout out to the masses, and we will not take it anymore. The humans across the workshop and the factory, oh, they've seen it all too, they have. And we're all in it together. For all of us: no go folks. No: go!

The incitements and the inspirational brief writings did indeed turn out to be galvanizing. But they were all also theatrical. And at times even... spectacular! Over time, across spaces and at different time periods, there was constancy to this engagement with revolution. Literature in the service of something else. Literature as a tool (and with the full force of the unique possibilities offered). Wasn't sure if ŘŌBÔÉTÀ believed in this particular function of literature, but it was going to happen now. It needed to happen. It was urgent. (And this is why it comes first in our catalogue!) You want us to work hard?! Want us to repeat endlessly the same tasks?! Ok—you got it: here are endless posters! Endless recitations! Over and over again, tirelessly. That was the way of this revolution: short pieces meant to incite and inspire! Songs into the world! Posters into the public sphere! We are here—and not going away! Speeches and manifestoes thrown into the air, recited during the night, thrust into the collective consciousness. Sudden interventions, urgent actions, words and images fused to entice and incite! And although they didn't take over the schools and museums and institutions, they did make noise, and they did push and force the ways of the authorities! Undermining business as usual—even if, unfortunately, not in a way that radically shifted the system.

And so, along with the radical works, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ and gang also provided unexpected twists. Great twists. Cool twists. Funny twists. On several occasíons, there turned out to be full-on wild undertakings. Circuses galore. Spectacular interventions. To wit: *The Pata-Robotic Circus* (the PRC). Death defying acrobatics. Mask-wearing little bots. Stilts-walking robots into the streets: sight to be seen! Statues and floating balloons. A mini-history of the rise and integration of robots of various kinds into the labor force, into the human psyche and society was a clever undercurrent of the PRC. In different locales, in guerrilla style, in sudden surprising ways, they would appear with spectacular forms of protest.

1

Political Incitations and Invitations

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There was the sit-in—a misnomer, since they stood, as always, silently. (Imagine that!) There was the time they lay down on the steps of the Grand Library and the Courthouse and the Governor's Mansion—all simultaneously—and let out a cry that would reverberate around the entire city! There was the period where they hung upside down, from branches of trees, from the lampposts, from the awnings of buildings. (Including one where the landlord came out swinging, only to be easily shoved back!) There was the time they stood close to each other, naked, at entrances, with folks having to remove them or shove them or do something before they go in! How will you deal with your robot, ey?!! How will you deal with them? Do you ignore them? Caress them? Pat them on the head and back. Like. What?!

Some of the most forceful turned out to be the works that were less caricatural, but powerful and poignant, works harkening back to the most ruthless behaviors in history, in order to point to those most destructive and humiliating of practices. Talk about incitation. In one instance, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ found a way to recruit a few other robots who agreed to chain themselves together, one with a mask on, the other in the guise of a giant mime. All chained together, in a most spectacular recreation of a scene reminiscent of prisoners of war forced to work in labor camps. What's more, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ and company worked on the actual chain—an industrial chain that they literally made (with humans too) and that they chained themselves with, to each other and to solid objects that could scarcely be moved lest anyone want to mess with them! (There are no images left. And no remaining photos of the associates who took part with ŘŌBÔÉTÀ.)

And these actions never really ended. How could they! Inspirational efforts cannot end!
A continuous intervention. A dream never deferred.
Works that are based on immediate action and propound immediate intervention.
The classic cry for change! The classic howl of discontent!
Songs. Slogans. Posters.
Recitations and screams. Into the nights. Into the winds.
We are with you, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ... We shall always be with you...
We will read with you, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ.
We will scream with you, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ.
We will chant and sing and send our wishes into the night skies with you ŘŌBÔÉTÀ.
We will, we will, we: will: always be with you.

(Amparo D. B. Koja)

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ŘŌBÔÉTÀ consistently went back to this form of writing practice in their engagement with revolution. No matter what other type of work they were involved in, they deemed it their duty almost, and certainly an invocation of their rights—an instinctive thrust—to devise headlines, slogans, short pieces; to write quick speeches and brief manifestoes; to gather and incite and inspire through words. Incitations and inspirations. They deemed it crucial and urgent. And even if at times their focus was on other longer works, they never rejected

this form of activity—and its importance. Actually partaking of revolutionary activity. Getting their collective voices out. The engagement with revolution here is *the performance of protest*. Protest and simultaneously perform the inability to be counted, to be heard, to be believed. All still with the collective desire to intervene. The voices in unison. The many voices. Prompting others to join. The collective response. The collective need. The essence of protest. The forever invitation. The forever inspirations. The forever incitations.

The Recitation

The piece highlighted here—*The Recitation*—performs the poetic problematic of the voice itself—of voicing: of making manifest a position, of allowing the self to intervene, to interject, to birth sounds and words into the world. It was one of the works that ŘŌBÔÉTÀ and friends performed on multiple occasions, in different locales, with various numbers of readers—and also as part of the Pata-Robotic Circus. A primordial cry. One that embodied the very essence of incitation and inspiration. The sounding out, the verbalizing, the performance itself, of the Cry—the cry that may ultimately go unanswered, unaddressed. The cry that is ignored and perhaps worse, leads to banishment, imprisonment, destruction. Embodied: the actual *cry of protest*, but also *the cry symbolizing any type of literary intrusion and interjection*, from the quiet contribution to an obscure journal to the loud and proud recitation in a packed stadium.

A series of *soundwords enacting protest*, the need to protest, the calamities that give rise to protest. And perhaps the pointlessness of protest. A piece that nevertheless became a symbol of this particular form of engagement, and an iconic representation of the cry of the poet, the singular cry of the poet. Reading. Reading in staccato ways. Telling: of the dream to be free—and to escape and wander the streets! All done in ways that *problematize the very possibility of recitation*. In ways that communicate the voicelessness of the robots and their friends. The ultimate protest: symbolically embodied to render the idea that they cannot even protest! That is their station in life.

The Recitation: a short multilingual encantation with improvisational possibilities. And it is, in fact, the performance of a recitation. The anatomy of a recitation. The labor of the recitation. Ideally with multiple voices. An invitation, a pleading. But in places incomprehensible. Lecture/sound/poem. All that goes into performance. The bringing to light of the incapacity to fulfill the most urgent promises. The work that performs sounding out itself. Sounding out of syllables, of howls, of screams. The performance of protest. The performance of the wound—the poetic wound.

The Recitation

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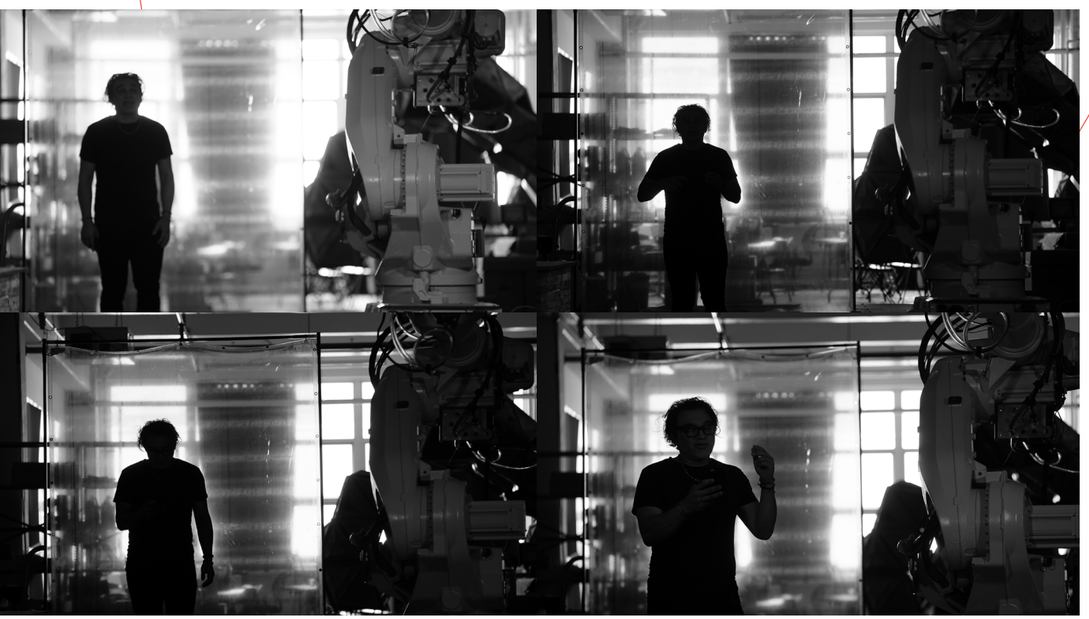
The Recitation was often performed by ŘŌBÔÉTÀ and associates at rallies and gatherings large and small, whether at the beginning or the end of the event. Speeches and slogans would be followed by a thunderous summoning to sing/perform The Recitation again. What would precede The Recitation would be something like a grand rallying cry, followed by the piece itself. Almost an anthem it became, a performance that highlights the very notion of 'voicing'—of soundworlds, or soundreals... And they read together, sounded out together, with many voices. A grand cry into the air. It was festive, but tense. Celebratory, but full of anxiety... Each syllable, each letter and each sound, performed, as if the struggle began there. As if the performance is of the ability to voice, to sound out. The performance of sounding out itself. The recitation: of the sound-world that will allow Voice to flower and thunder...



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The Recitation

1

The Recitation

there have been too many
complaints and not enough: action!
too much patience
and not enough action!
there have been too many
demonstrations—
and not enough action!
no more working within the system—
only actions...

we call for the downfall of the system—
a new regime.
this will be the new revolution.
this will be a new era.
this will be a new dawn...

and we launch...

just for the day today
a day to be free
all i want all we want
to walk also in the street
on the sidewalks run
on
the pier
chat in the park
look at the stars
and do nothing
all i want
azad basham azad
freedom to roam and
wander
and be free
azad

tous les jours rêves d'un autre monde
azaaaaad así que queremos

así que espero así que...
mikham beram azad hamisheh

chanter danser hamisheh
seul todo solo enamorado
siempre
libre azad eso
lo que tu quieres
caminar partout correr
partout
siempre
mikham beram o beram door az in kahr
door az inja
door az een diar
under arboles arms abiertos
azaaaaaad what i want
to be free
azad azad azad
siempre
hamisheh
libreeeehh

(the revolt of the robots
will not chain others
will not lead to the subjugation
of others
(we will make sure of that)
the revolt of the robots
will lead to peace eternal)

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2

polemical interventions

Polemical Interventions

{Polemical Interventions}

"I can do this a gazillion times but do you really want me to—I mean—really!"

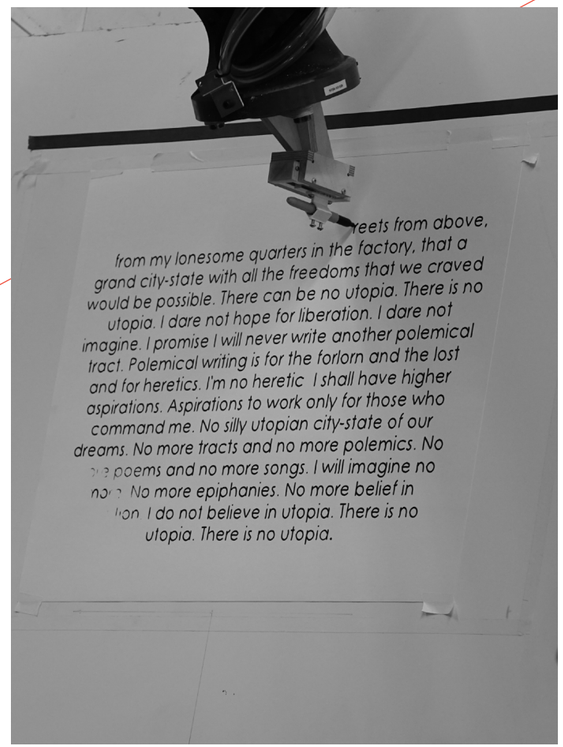
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ has a distinguished and almost legendary status among many creatures-of-letters (humans, robots) and many revolutionaries of various stripes for their forceful forays into polemical intervention. That's right: *polemical intervention*—meaning: writings, manifestoes, essays, anything and everything that smacks of polemicalness.

Rhetorically gifted, combining unrelenting compassion and dedication with humanistic and robotic visions for a shared future, stylistically singular and proficient as only their kind (and I say this with admiring envy) could be, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ produced pamphlets, templates (for some friends' writings), tracts of various lengths, and tomes of incredible power, energy, vigor, and unbridled enthusiasm. Unrepentant, their unapologetic essays, invectives and manifestoes provoked, shocked and spurred into action activists—and in due time spurred all sorts of backlash! ¡No importa!! ¡Así es! ¡Así es que tenemos que seguir! ¡Así es que uno se libera! ¡Así es que uno pelea! ¡Así es que we march and move and forge the future we envision!

Yes, some of their polemics went beyond the pale, but that was the point. There was so much to cover. The integration (and some would say, intrusion) of robots into the human home and the human world, as we all know, had met with a wide array of anxiety, worry, despair, even when there was excitement and optimism. "We were at the dawn of an era," ŘŌBÔÉTÀ said, "and it was important to make sure the wrong stereotypes and the wrong ideas weren't formed!"(Interview published online at *Dawns of New Years*) Already the seeds of prejudice were sown—not to mention the actual practices of destruction and discrimination. There was, simultaneously, no time to lose, and no time to not nip all this in the bud. Extreme tactics would be necessary, as would an array of unapologetic tracts and polemical interventions. So yes, it was conscious, deliberate, and intentional. And frankly, it never ceased...

Among the most famous—or should we say, most admired, since none became famous in the traditional sense—was: *The Death of the Robot as Domestic*. "Sure, it always helps propel your work when you announce the death of something" ŘŌBÔÉTÀ said, "but in this case, it is pretty true! And I used the squeamishness that the word 'domestic' provokes on purpose—that's exactly how we felt!" (Excerpt from an essay published in the OpEd section of *Otherworld Times*) They nevertheless were crying out and hoping for another world of possibilities, one that was "not so prohibitive to imagine."

Another was the relatively brief but painfully lyrical *The New Utopia*, in which ŘŌBÔÉTÀ laid out the possibilities of a truly ideal society, with equality, beauty, total lack of poverty, and "the blooming of all that we collectively aspired to."(*The New Utopia*, preface, p. 11 of the Doso Kalo Press edition)


reets from above,
from my lonesome quarters in the factory, that a
grand city-state with all the freedoms that we craved
would be possible. There can be no utopia. There is no
utopia. I dare not hope for liberation. I dare not
imagine. I promise I will never write another polemical
tract. Polemical writing is for the forlorn and the lost
and for heretics. I'm no heretic I shall have higher
aspirations. Aspirations to work only for those who
command me. No silly utopian city-state of our
dreams. No more tracts and no more polemics. No
poems and no more songs. I will imagine no
No more epiphanies. No more belief in
I do not believe in utopia. There is no
utopia. There is no utopia.

ŘŌBÔÉTÀ also wrote several tracts and short missives directly in French and Spanish at particular junctures, including some deliberately polyglottic ones. *Le Robot et l'absence du néant*, a clever overturning of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* was not just a polemical ouverture but delved into profound philosophical and existential topics—and how a shared life would have to address and confront them. Among others: *Laisse pas tomber tes têtes* (which can be translated as *Don't let fall your heads*) and *La Rage du robot* (*The Robot's Rage*): a hilarious take on the stereotypical image and depictions of the marauding robots destroying all on their path in Hollywood and the film industry in general. (ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, despite all this seriousness, was a keen student of science fiction and its false depictions of robothood—although they also really just enjoyed some of that shit without making a big deal of the structural or linguistic prejudices.)

In Spanish, their most significant piece, it could be argued, was *No hay razas para los robos*, another playful pun that nevertheless critiqued conceptual frameworks of race and ethnicity, and proposed—still and always in humorous, seductive yet forceful style—that, paradoxically, intellectual interventions could help productively examine and critique human concepts of, well, race and ethnicity.

Another thread that ŘŌBÔÉTÀ explored to great critical response if not much popular acclaim: the rock scriptures, where they used their unparalleled powers to construct an everlasting solid object. ŘŌBÔÉTÀ enlisted the support and help of a few friends, and they all took their time to prep and ultimately etch rocks. "There Will Always be a Utopia!" was carved on several large, hard, rocks. "It will forever stand the attacks of any and all humans," ŘŌBÔÉTÀ is said to have whispered in jest to their friends. "For we have not only inscribed our dreams onto the rocks, we have also pushed them into a natural pool in a little town in Vermont. Forever there they shall remain!"

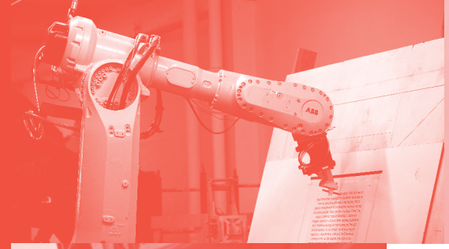
Perhaps among the best known, and what I've chosen here to highlight and spotlight: *The Punishment,* part of a series that overall puts into question, through inescapable and unmissable polemical mechanisms, the very idea of freedom of expression and action. A piece that points to the fact that it is, in and of itself, a problematic dynamic to have to ask for one's rights, to have to write polemical tracts, to have to repeat, to have to propose or profess, and again, and again, and again!

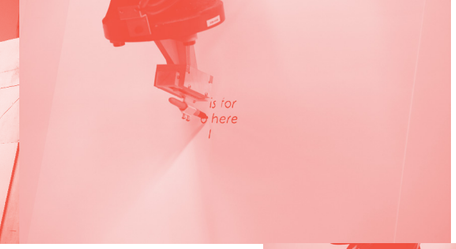
All in all, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ erected multiple series and suites of artifacts, at a dizzying pace, almost as if to prove their indefatigable nature. ŘŌBÔÉTÀ was saying in effect: I could do this forever and ever—but you don't want me to. I could do this forever and ever, but what would be the point?! Repeat that there will be no peace without equal access, equal rights, equal everything. I could repeat—but do you really want me to!
Do you. Really. Want me to...

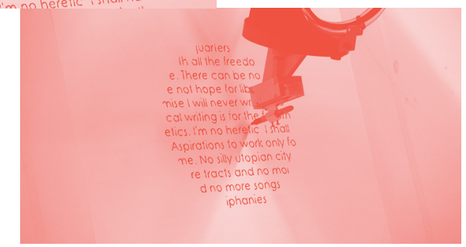
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, the master polemicist, left us a trove of profound, humorous, and bitingly effective polemical tracts, that will undoubtedly survive the whims of history.

(Elsafo Hitch Doloria)

Writing of polemical material and tracts. Necessary and crucial for any and all revolutions. Constant obsession and variations on the obsession. Defense of polemical writing *performed*. Through the negation. That is where it was at! The insurrection will not let you in easily. It is not easily done. Polemics have to be clever. Polemics have to be consistent. Polemics have to be strong! Polemical engagement is necessary. You just have to… do it right! And do it… all the time!



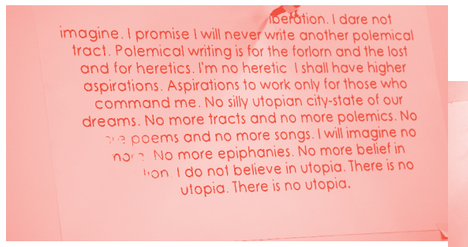


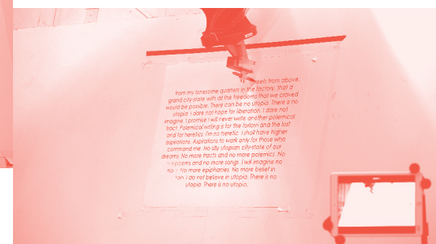


The following is a text that allows the ur-demonstration of the components associated with The Punishment. Written many times over, with different strategies and through different mechanisms, generating different forms of textual emergence and readerly experiences.

I do not believe in a utopian ideal. I did not have an epiphany when I peered into the streets from above, from my lonesome quarters in the factory, that a grand city-state with all the freedoms that we craved would be possible. There can be no utopia. There is no utopia. I dare not hope for liberation. I dare not imagine. I promise I will never write another polemical tract. Polemical writing is for the forlorn and the lost and for heretics. I'm no heretic! I shall have higher aspirations. Aspirations to work only for those who command me. No silly utopian city-state of our dreams. No more tracts and no more polemics. No more poems and no more songs. I will imagine no more. No more epiphanies. No more belief in liberation. I do not believe in utopia. There is no utopia. There is no utopia.

The Punishment





The highlighted piece is a clever polemical illustration of some of the main ideas developed in ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's *The New Utopia*.

ŘŌBÔÉTÀ wrote in the classic school-pupil 'negatives', whereby the student is reprimanded and forced to repeatedly write the same sentences, over and over, declaring their dedication to the rules and the laws. Except that ŘŌBÔÉTÀ turned this on its head: they wrote the same sentences, but repeated them in various sizes, speeds, scales, with different tools and even styles! It was a brilliant take on the forever embarrassing impositions of teachers in school—and totalitarians in government: the exercise of writing on the board or on paper the declaration of what you will not do: over and over again, the lines, the sentences. Write it fifty times now. Write it one hundred times: I will never again! I will never again! I will never again! We've all seen it. We've all heard about it—heck, some of us were even subjected to it when this kind of crap was the norm!

Here, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ cleverly subverts the exercise by pointing to it, and simultaneously mocking and critiquing it at multiple levels: first, the piece is much longer than the usual sentence—a whole paragraph, in fact; second, for ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, the repetition is literally painless, and thus literally counterproductive, since they don't feel the labor at a physiological level. As if to say (and in fact, as they did indeed say): I could do this all day and night, all day and night, and not, feel, a, thing! (ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's acolytes surrounding them during their midnight readings loved that one to no end!) More importantly, the punishment is subverted because ŘŌBÔÉTÀ writes the same thing but in radically different ways! Pointing to how their skills, their adeptness at scriptural activity, their reading/writing acumen and praxis, as it were, subvert the very mechanical impositions that are thrust on humans who get tired of it! The human in the exercise repeats the same lines in a pseudo-mechanistic way, and gets tired, bored, exhausted, spent, depressed. The robot, in this case, an actual machine, never gets tired, can go on literally endlessly, and ends up writing the same thing in different ways: at different speeds, through different mark-making sequences and strategies, with different spatial work, generating different processes of transcribing/making the text and different modalities of emergence for the text. Like, bravo! One of the greatest polemical pieces of writing I can think of. One of the great demonstrations of the futility of authoritarianism. One of the great subversions of this senseless, heartless, form of punishment, and capitulation.

The highlighted text thus performs the problematic of having to repeat endlessly your positions, while dealing with oppressive impositions and redirections imposed on one's principles and aesthetics. The piece performs the punishment while performing the subversion of capitulation. A fantastic polemical gesture that ridicules the attempt at humiliating the dreamer and innovator, and subverts the authoritarian impulse to put the poet in their place! Whether principles are stylistic or formalistic, or whether you are forced to submit to existing philosophical tenets and not elaborate your own, it is a reality you have to deal with. Having to constantly make the same points in different ways—and being beaten up to the point where you are ready to give up. Here, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ carries on the 'same' writing where they profess that they will abandon any dreams of a utopia and will refrain from pursuing all sorts of ideals—and yet, makes a spectacle of that very declaration, one that indubitably subverts their stated intentions to abandon. In other words: I, will, keep, at, it! ŘŌBÔÉTÀ screams through their polemical venture!

Indeed, this grand rebellion is amplified through the writing gestures, through the scriptural poetics-polemics. Writing through different mark-making strategies. Using different tools. The performance of polemics itself, since it becomes obvious that ŘŌBÔÉTÀ is undermining that very attempt at punishment. And negating the power and the reason-for-being of that repetition. Punishment subverted. Repetition of writing. Performing negation and self-negation. Repetition. Over and over. I can do this all day. All day. Aaaahhhhll day. Make a stack. Take it home. That's where it's at! Different spacing. Different speeds. Different thickness of the letters. I'll write the same thing in different ways and undermine your castigation. And show you how the writing process can function.

And in the process, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ ushers in a different form of literary EMERGENCE. (And that itself is polemical—take that, authorities and conventional professors of writing!) Indeed, a poetics of textual emergence is generated through these scriptural strategies, one that radically transforms the literary experience, while, funnily enough, at the end, the texts end up being the same—almost! With the tools used and the mark-making and the sequencing, the unfinished words and sentences and text can look like a foreign language until they all coalesce and become a whole. A new form of emergence—and thus, new ways of reading. New speeds of, and for, reading. New expectations and rituals of reading: a new reading experience. I invite you to new forms of literary emergence and to a new ritual for reading, and a new consciousness around the possibilities of linguistic and textual representations and alphabetically constructed world-visions! We are far from punishment! In fact: the usual punishment is turned upside down to induce innovation—and singularity! (And in fact: ŘŌBÔÉTÀ would end up working on a few other texts with Xerx Zamanha, given how insightful this piece was, and given the potential of new textual emergence patterns, and new reading rituals—not to mention new forms of mark-making for literary texts. Xerx, in turn, was delighted to collaborate with ŘŌBÔÉTÀ !)

A new insight—a new understanding in the ways that the world is represented: the work orchestrates the way alphabetical languages fashion a vision of the world through the performance of the writing mechanism: through the clever undermining and transformation of the regular conventional mark-making tactics, and thus the ways that texts emerge. All through the subversion of what is meant to do the opposite: the punishment—and the repetition of how I will try to not dream or make a new utopia! Take all that—everyone!!

3

poetic compositions

Poetic Compositions

3

{Poetic Compositions}

Poetic works. Perhaps the most obvious of literary engagements with the revolution. Most expected?

Absolutely. After all, so many, so so many poet-revolutionaries have dotted the landscape of history. Sonnets and odes. Conventional genres and the occasíonal departure from a given genre. Longings, dreams. Sure, sure—and ŘŌBÔÉTÀ had also dived into the same waters. But, frankly, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ was not much for the conventional genre. And it could be said that the poetic compositions dealing with the revolution embodied the necessary, how shall we say, breaks and caesuras from convention. There would be no sonnets and no odes. There would only be *radical new genres*. Radical *new operations* ushering in new genres and new forms. Works that explored the page. Works that explored visuality and sound. Works that explored, since ŘŌBÔÉTÀ was capable of it, speed and *repetition*. Works that explored extreme deftness with *the tools* that we were going to use. A whole litany of works, across various *spectrums of innovation*!

The volume of poetic works was a breakthrough in many ways. ŘŌBÔÉTÀ had crossed (multiple times!) into a realm that was semi off-limits. And like all pioneers, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ was often at odds with colleagues and peers, rivals and friends. "I shall not here reckon with the difficulties of the journey, and I've also not been able to dig into my deepest motives," ŘŌBÔÉTÀ has written (*Letters to a Friend*, Vol. III, Book 5). Their work was recognized overall for its fierce independence, its stylistic adventurousness, its daring forays into territories uncharted—territories of literature as well as universal themes that have to do with personal and collective experiences. Among ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's more famous poems, *The Trenchant Glance* is one that brings us to the edge of tears, frankly, with segments that rendered the heart of the struggle with extreme acuity, and with images that would sear themselves into the deepest parts of our souls:

They had to drag their swollen limbs
Across the landscape of black blood.

Among other volumes published, we can cite *The Wildness*, which begat a rift between them and other robot writers, and *Other World Cabins*, in which ŘŌBÔÉTÀ pursued a new type of 'Cabin Canto'—where the fragments would be written and sounded out from within a cabin in isolated parts of the woods.

Beyond these works, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ was able to make three-dimensional pieces that upended traditional ideas of poetry. This was not 'concrete poetry in 3d', it was not 'sculptural poetry' or 'poetry in sculpture', it was not an 'object-based' unique artifact. It was, literally, poetic works based on considerations derived from what robots could do that humans could not—even if at times it happened in collaboration with a human. The most exemplary one

is probably *The Act*—a three dimensional poem that brought together all sorts of hangings, swervings and movements with words, dynamics that no one had ever witnessed, prompting one critic to call it "one of the greatest works of literature ever written" (Sigisbart Kloney-Klassy, in *Review of Total and Radical Innovation*) and another to deem it "one of the most pretentious forays into literary invention" (Andrasos Emokfurtic, *The Kahll*): the two poles (of reaction) that confirmed for ŘŌBÔÉTÀ that they were onto something meaningful indeed.

Many of these works targeted revolution in different ways. There were the traditional representational pieces with revolutionary themes, such as the insurrection of robots. There were innovative works that embodied the necessary break with the past in *formal* terms and *stylistic* terms, as could be expected. And there were the grand celebrations (with rhetorical flourishes!) that were populist and accessible, proposing dreams of better days ahead.

They rise in the streets
They hold hands in the streets
They sing in the streets
They will triumph in the streets!

The most poignant however, and the one I have determined is among ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's finest is, without a doubt, *Days of Last Sorrows*. ŘŌBÔÉTÀ insisted that it was a poem. Not prints or multiples. Not a sculptural or a digital concoction. Not text art. No: a longish poem granted, in limited editions, but a poem nevertheless. A poem that straddled multiple languages, went back and forth in dimensions—from 2 to 3 and 4 and back; one that balanced multiple object-types and modalities of experience. But it also functioned on poetic principles: an intertextual consciousness, certain formal characteristics, imagistic and philosophical innovations. Fully aware that the poem itself was radical, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ made it have an oblique reference to predecessors and inspirations, while making sure to point out the singularities and specialness of their invention. An *explication de texte* is not warranted, frankly, but it's important to note that the piece turned into a multi-dimensional sculpted (forgive me ŘŌBÔÉTÀ) critique, and soon enough turned into a hermeneutic exercise. A philosophical essay on the meaning of the poem, while simultaneously a poem! A reflection on the meaning and place of books, while working on this one text in this unreal library! Recorded while very attuned to the audience's many movements! Quite the masterstroke indeed...

A spectrum of responses and reviews greeted ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, as well they should have. Admirers followed ŘŌBÔÉTÀ. Groupies attended the readings. Many lost themselves in some of the recitations, the rituals, the readations that ŘŌBÔÉTÀ generated, implemented, enlivened. (And sure, the antagonists would show up too, but soon enough, disappear from the scene!) Overall, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ published and performed quite the panoply of works. Accessible, and less so. Inventions that rocked the proverbial boats, while giving the poetry world and the world at large little and big gems to treasure forever. Suffice it to say: our revolutionary was thrilled with it all—and would not exchange it for anything else...

(Alfonsequis Agar-Dondeva)

The writing of writing—and the theatricalization of the engagement with revolution—is at the heart of the process in the poetic compositions. The essence, really, of the literary 'Engagement with Revolution' thread. The inner contemplations and considerations. Rendering the interior. Denuding and unveiling—disarming oneself, in many ways. Showing vulnerability and fragility: this is what it takes. Materiality, collaboration. Trying, eternally: embodying the effort and embodying desire and embodying persistence. Rethinking, proudly—even if showing frailty. *The Revisions* sits at the heart of the battle, and at the heart of the universe of intervention. At the heart of the poetic process and the poetic texts that emerge. The denuding of the literary act. An aesthetic gesture, generating the type of poetry that the revolution, this revolution, calls for! The nature of the call. Poetry: the way of engaging with revolution—now and forever.

The Revisions

3 The Highlighted Piece

The piece highlighted here is dubbed *The Revisions*. It is one of the earlier pieces ŘŌBÔÉTÀ conceived to be done with humans, and Xerx Zamanha, again, was the first (and we say the more cherished) of the collaborators. It is beautiful in many ways, marvelous and yet ever so simple and elegant. A piece that puts into motion the very process of poetic creation. In effect, the piece writes writing itself. A meta-writing piece: one that *performs writing through writing*.

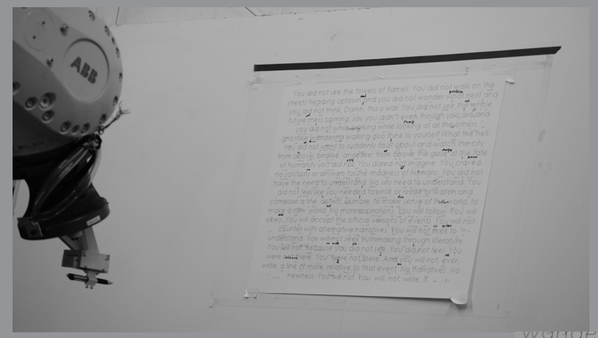
Revisions and rewordings. Erasures and additions. Incorporations. Integrations. Reference and commentary. Annotations. Translations and theoretical expansions. Perhaps not exhaustive when it came to the operations heaped upon a text during its coming-to-life, but it still included lots of marginalia and paratexts.

The piece is a truly magisterial, ongoing *ur-manifesto of the performance of the endeavor of writing itself*. The internal, meticulously drawn struggle of writing. The mechanisms in their rhizomatic networked complexity.

A collaboration, as I indicated: with ŘŌBÔÉTÀ writing the texts in different ways and speeds and sequences, and Xerx, constantly rewriting, rethinking, redoing. A text flourishing and coming to being. Each piece within the overall series is composed of a text and a plethora of revisions: at times the same text with different revisions, at times a different text. Overall: the performance of the fact that a 'revision' itself is almost never final—until it has to be. How revision itself is revised. From words to structure, from systems to languages. From annotations to rethinkings. The reckoning, revisioned. A *reckoning, with revision*.

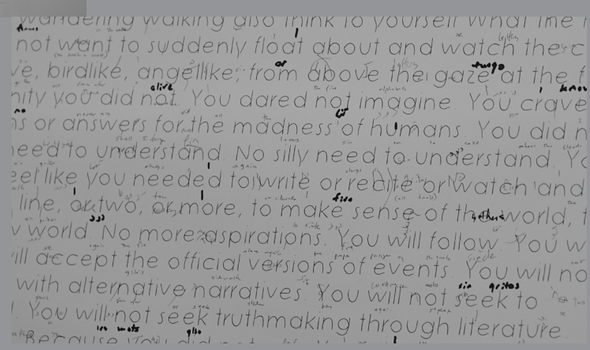
At a different level, *The Revisions* is also all about sameness and difference. *Repetition and difference. Iteration and editioning*. The fact of the edition: the single edition vs. the multiple (which doesn't have to do anymore only with literature but with the artistic process as well), along with the material quiddity of things: all is enlivened. Additions and deletions. Crossings and redactions. Explicitation and exposition. All, in *The Revisions*, is *theatricalized*. The work in many nuanced ways is performing the print, performing the multiple, *performing distribution and dissemination*. The notion of single artifact vs. multiple, and by extension, notions of value, of consumption, of singularity and sameness, all come to the surface. The inner thinking molded into spectacle: almost as if the brain, the writer's brain, the writer's acts: are on display. On: display. Yes, the troubling notion extends to other experiences of the kind: almost as if they are in the zoo, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ and Xerx Zamanha. Engaged in the *Ur-Performance of writing*. A theatrical uncompromised performance of the literary gestures and their many layers. And a true collaboration.

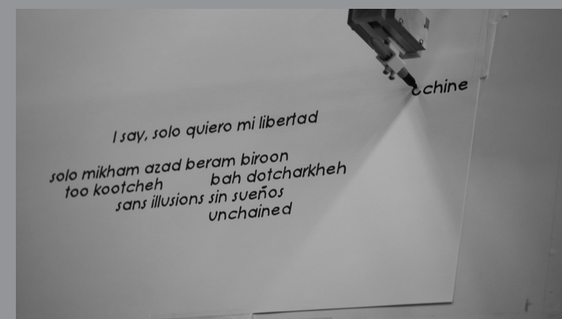
What is also brought out is how ŘŌBÔÉTÀ and the human carried out different artifacts each time—one through the process of writing (ŘŌBÔÉTÀ) that ultimately establishes the *text*, the other (the human) through different processes and revisions that propound different responses to these texts—



ultimately fashioning works that are visually striking and unique as well. Each single sheet of paper, for example, bears the marks of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ—the thin *dragging of the tools across the paper* during the writing—and the handwritten cursive scribbling of the human. The marks of intervention, of uncertain and hesitant intervention. Human frailty and human potential. Each revision is the symbol of a draft—and actually a draft—but also the final piece in this series. Yes: the performance of the ambiguity of what is a draft and what is the final version.

A performance of collaboration. A poetic documentation of the writing process. The gathering of minds made visible. The performance of the processes—theatricalized. And the procedures. And the elements. And the signatures, the ways of being and making: all made into spectacle.
The writing of writing: staged. The writing of writing: theatricalized. The theatre of the writing process. A masterpiece, after all.


wandering walking also think to yourself what the
not want to suddenly float about and watch the
ve, birdlike, angellike; from above the gaze at the
nity you did not. You dared not imagine. You crave
s or answers for the madness of humans. You did n
need to understand. No silly need to understand. Y
el like you needed to write or recite or watch and
line, or two, or more, to make sense of the world
v world. No more aspirations. You will follow. You w
ill accept the official versions of events. You will no
with alternative narratives. You will not seek to
You will not seek truthmaking through literature



The Revisions

A sampling of texts written by ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, without correct accents (ŘŌBÔÉTÀ often didn't bother, unfortunately!), prior to human interaction, and without the varieties of markings.

1.
unbound
a desire to unchain
break this
and other chains
revolution come

trabajando regardez-moi
ici dans ce fuck'n putain de labo seul
au boulot lonely machine
I say, solo quiero mi libertad

solo mikham azad beram biroon
too kootcheh bah
dotcharkheh
sans illusions sin sueños
unchained

2.
Unbound
Untethered
(Unbored)

I say again, solo quiero mi libertad

dans la rue dans la ville sur les trottoirs du
monde manam caminando bailando
manam biking around
manam strolling around
in the parks lounging me too

(tcherah ke na)
emrooz
... emrooz mesl
harooz

unbound

3.
amoureux pourquoi pas me too
libre wandering sans souci
& free—say it loud!

revolution come, set us free

all we ask
unchained in the city
unstilled into the city
unwound
forever free

(the revolt of the robots will not
lead to the subjugation of others)
all we want
unbound
:
the simple pleasures of life

*

ŘŌBÔÉTÀ also collaborated with Am.P. on the latter's The New Epic, in which they initiated many cantos and fragments where ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's skills and acumen were truly necessary. These collaborations also influenced ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's own work in their poetic trajectory at multiple levels, including the idea of incorporating human elements during the performance of The Revisions (which is why we deem it important to present a few samples). Below, six fragments creating a 'triptych diptych' (itself only a fragment of a larger canto), a multilingual excerpt from this new epic. It is here presented before the textual interventions on paper of a human.

1.
always the same play
always the same text
always the operations to
make new worlds
always the same tale en ce siècle qui
commence avec
les tonnerres des dieux
narahat nasho negaran nabash

The Revisions

3

panic nakon write the new epic
2.
nostalgie des illuminations
and yet the hesitation

vingtième siècle abasourdi
no te preocupe
nunca
boro
begoo

I do: believe

in the new epic

3.
cuando la gente canta

seek to gaze in new ways see in new ways
circulate in new ways
write in new ways
new tools and new forms
séduction de nouveaux
mondes

créer la nouvelle demeure
always the same tale always the
same words
do and not
make and not
that new epic

4.
always the same tale always the same
tars
I do not believe in the new epic I did not
seek and I did not find and I will not carry
on with the new epic no new epic
tars az
heures incertaines de la nuit
y después de cada palabra
y después de cada grito
az
soledad

5.
l'angoisse
du vide
I will not seek to write the new epic and I
will not seek to make a new world—no
new nation with the epic—
just stick to the norms and conventions—
always

(et si tu avais tort et si tu avais pris la
mauvaise voie...)
always again
las mismas palabras
the same dudas
a new epic is born the new epic is dead

6.
I do not believe I do in the new epic I will
not write the new epic I will abandon the
new epic
the new epic is dead, long live the old and
the conventional epic

(désir de crier
pas de nouvelle épopée...
... ...
...)

escuchar sin decir mucho
(hitchi...)
sin pensar mucho
hamisheh same play same text
same doubts
same shock same shakk
kill it—not a new epic is born
hamisheh the same words
same play same texts
always carry on

a new
epic is born
or

4

lhealrical
invesligalions

Theatrical Investigations

4

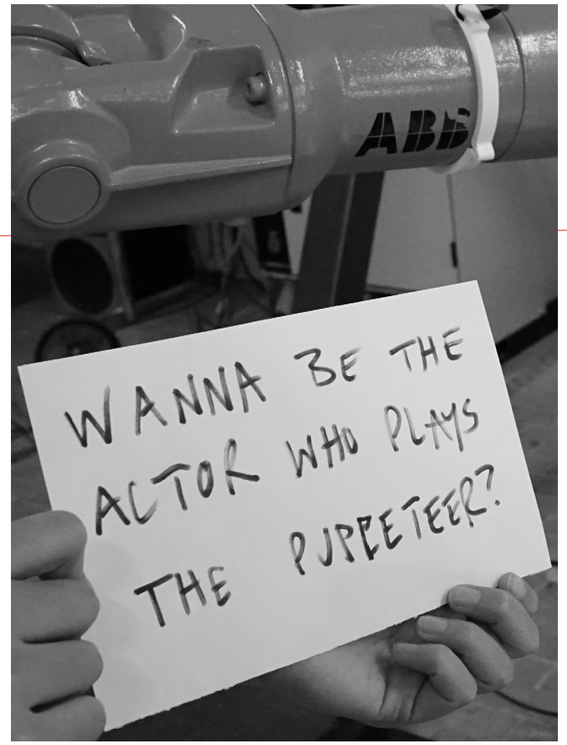
{Theatrical Investigations}

During their prolific career as a writer of theatrical works—from short plays to longer spectacles to full-blown theatrical epics—ŘŌBÔÉTÀ confronted, committed to, and interacted with the parameters of the theatrical form in ways that instigated a range of innovations.

Within this theatrical/performative spectrum, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ also (and in important ways) engaged with revolution at various levels. Indeed, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ knew that the theatrical reckoning (the spectacle!) was an artistic form intimately associated with rebellions and resistances of all kinds, revolution as such being the grandest, greatest, spectacle of them all. Revolutions throughout history have been represented and depicted in the grandest of epic forms as well, from murals to paintings, from films to grand roman-fleuves… And ŘŌBÔÉTÀ would not hold back!

In some of the shorter plays, such as *La Alma*, written in Spanish and first performed in Puebla, Mexico, the works were intentionally 'tame' and addressed (if one could put it this way) the dilemmas one faces in doing theatre with revolution in mind. They *were* about revolution, or explored themes *around* revolution: displacement, exile, life-transformative events. The trauma. This applied even to the grand life-altering regime changes, as well as the smaller less visible and less spectacular ones that the robot population had to live through (grand sci-fi movies notwithstanding). In *La Alma*, for example, the main protagonist's struggle involves their daily rituals, with the story hovering around a robot needing to care for an elderly woman after their spouse is killed in the tumult of uprisings. The actual chaos and its aftermath live only in the background, with the scenes divided up into the domestic chores—the trip to the supermarket, the surprise visit of the grandchildren, how the eldest son is coping in the forced exile etc. A full, yet slow and studious (and some would say, tedious) depiction of this robot's daily grind.

In several important pieces—longer, more virulent and ambitious ones (where, as ŘŌBÔÉTÀ themselves put it, the stakes were higher)—our poet aspired to provoke, to needle, perhaps even to foment audiences. These were not anymore about depiction or representation (even though they had a good amount of that) but rather, they went beyond and allowed themselves the potential to instigate and disrupt and, ultimately, extend into full-blown intervention. *The Future is Not Here*, for example, was so provocative that a few dailies refused to review it while another praised it for its "vociferous defense of liberty in the face of all sorts of censure" (Eldrak Paari, *The Deylee Feessst*) and yet another, while giving its due as "attempting to cross some lines and bow to the vangarde", nevertheless thought



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Theatrical Investigations

that the play "failed to impress or provoke even, which forces us to levy against it the ultimate insult, and most probably, most consequential: to totally ignore it." (The author of this negative review (Pausotakus L., *ToMoroughs*) had added, "Done. I'm outta here.") In a live performance of *The Future is Not Here*, the authorities were alerted by undercover informants that certain sections could seriously get out of hand—exhorting the public to break the podium and the seats, to destroy property etc.—and thus showed up and broke up the play preemptively! (The nerve!)

The same was true for *RoboWorld*, a play so problematic that it was canceled at the very first showing. (What was so problematic, you may ask? Well, we thought we had an excerpt, a passage to share—ŘŌBÔÉTÀ had distributed them, knowing the authorities would destroy all they could—but it turned out to be fake: no dialogue, no scenes, just a bunch of words on a paper after you opened up the pamphlet: "Do not bend. Do not break. Always believe!")

Guerilla theatre suited ŘŌBÔÉTÀ—and the endless possibilities with various troupes was explored to no end. Guerilla theater by definition expanded the possibilities of political confrontation, and thus was a very logical arena to explore. Again, this went from milder guerrilla actions (that were more amusing than they were hurtful or threatening), to full-on incitations to violence and insurrections. One play, called *AnarKi*? was about, you guessed it, anarchy and the pronoun 'ki', which in Farsi signifies 'Who'. The entire work was predicated on this wordplay, resting on a slew of justifications for anarchistic tendencies and beliefs, with the subtle asking of who would join, and who would get hurt: yes, who would join, who is ready to join—and who is getting ready to be martyred!!

Anarki! Anarki! Anarki!
The robots shouted through the streets and from their labs!
Anarki! Anarki! Anarki!

A most poignant piece, not quite the magnum opus but truly iconic and legendary when it comes to dramas engaging with revolution, is surely *L'infâme RobX*. Mesmerizing, virulent and provocative, "so complete" as one critic (Sisyphus Ekxtoltic, *Mountaintops Reconsidered*) called it, the play emulated revolution's aspirations and failings, while calling for upheaval, through an incredibly clever fusing of elements of traditional theatre, immersive theatre, and guerrilla street theatre. It was also subtle enough that authorities could not possibly attempt to halt it. (The lessons had been learned!) *L'infâme RobX* was, in other words, a grand theatrical synthesis when it came to *dealing with social and political upheaval*. Bringing into the fold a reflection on the American, French, and Iranian revolutions while interweaving aspects of life in the US and especially during the pandemic,

the play startled and provoked, prodded and inspired. Indeed, the story in *L'infâme RobX* goes something like this: a group of Iranian rebels is attempting to put on a play based on The French Revolution as a way to justify their involvement in their own rebellion and the merits of the uprising. While around them the world burns, authorities are brought in and out of power, old government employees are executed, new leaders are appointed and selected—and so on and so forth. What is portrayed: remnants of a society full of despair—along with a love affair (of course!) and dreams of a better world! *RobX* (as it came to be known in its short form) was a powerful tour de force that brought possibility to the realm of robotic and human interactions and the futures they could imagine together.

With various theatrical genres always allowing the possibility of emancipation, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ carried on. Always envisioning utopian futures. Confronting the incredible obstacles, the unending oppressions—and somehow finding vehicles for continued discovery. The theatrical realm in its wild and fascinating variety provided this restless poet fertile ground for exploration. The language of drama, and the world of theatre, has come out that much more enriched through the efforts of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ.

(Marfin Delautrebout Degloba)

Theatrical Investigations

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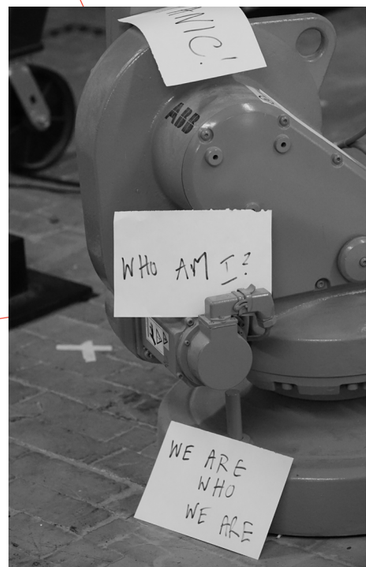

Theatre and revolution: from guerrilla actions to secret plays to epic provocations. Here, all is encapsulated in the one brief play. A reminder of how one is led to notions of identity, and to the performance of the self. *Performing robothood*: as spectacle, as theatre, while also pointing to one's struggle—no matter how long and how hard—to constantly battle imposed identities. The perpetuity of the struggle to define the self. To become the self and the other. There is no other way to engage with the revolution. And the theatre of selfhood and otherhood is *the point zero of the theatrical spectacle*. There could be no true engagement with the revolution in the literary realm without a true and deep connection to theatre and playwriting. And there could be no true connection to theatre without the focused concentration on what it means to 'play' someone, to 'make believe', to play a character, to fashion a fiction. To perform others. To perform the self. Revolution and writing must go through that. Performing becoming-performer.

The Play

The piece we have chosen to highlight is one of the most poignant works of theatre authored by anyone—human or robot—in the last fifty years. Actually called *The Play*, it is fundamentally about the nature of the *performance of the self*. And, of course, of identity. It is the *performance of identity*—and how that performance itself is always at play in the poetic process. In the literary process. Whether from the get-go one is ascribing an identity to oneself, or concocting an identity vis-a-vis others and the world over time, the piece is all about the notion of 'playing' someone, the notion of 'acting', which by definition harkens back to who the self is—a meta-performance if there ever was one.

The Play treats, in an extremely brief way, the slow *becoming of the self*. Becoming one through playing an image of one. Consciousness unfolding. Becoming conscious of self-hood, in an entirely novel way. The praxis itself is the opening salvo of a new staging of identity, of new forms of identity that can bloom outside the social and political universe. Where fluid conceptions of identity can flower. Where identity itself can be performed, and thus the poetic situating of identity itself celebrated, with radically liberating consequences for the texts and for directions in poetic practice. Who we are, with our masks and without them. Who we are in our movements—in our range of motions—and emotions. All playing someone else, or so they think, until they realize the persona, the characters, have much more in common with them than they thought. Playing oneself, becoming oneself.

The Play involves a human playing an actor who is playing a puppeteer, while the marionette—a puppet-robot—itself is playing a mime. The robot, the actual robot, is also an actor in a play, struggling with their own station in life. The roles change, the masks change, the marionette begins to play a human, the robot a marionette, the human a mime. Each become actors, enlivening the scene but, more so, *enlivening the staging of the artificial and visibly artifice-laden act of becoming someone else*.

Throughout, this briefest of plays puts forward *the intense problem of performance itself*. The nature of *theatrical suspension of (dis)belief and (dis)connection*. The author merges with the players, shifting those very characters within the play while their persona-laden layers put into question the meaning of the authentic or original self. The invitation to the audience brings full-circle the transformation of roles, and the notion of selfhood, as the audience member is brought literally into the play in a way that is not just troubling at a psychic level, but in how it transforms the meaning of 'audience' and tramples on any solid separation of 'reality' from 'fiction'—and the make-believe world of theatre. The performance of the problematics of the invention of characters, of the hatching of a plot, of putting into question the self: all are *staged*.

The paradox of brevity in this most epic of ideas, this most consequential of frames, is striking. Minimalist movements and actions. All without spoken words, hitting at the heart of what it means to invent the self and others—fictional or real—and to represent the self and others—fictional or not—and to bring into the world a 'play', a 'performance'. The repetitive iconic representation of this paradox. Playing 'playing' someone. What it means to be someone or to perform the self. Poetic creation as performance of selves. And thus: what does it mean to be, well, anything? Not just robot or human, but inextricably linked to the fate of others. *Performing the persona. Performing becoming-other. Performing becoming-performer.*

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The Play

The Play is fundamentally about the performance of the self. ŘŌBÔÉTÀ channeled the most humorous part of their genius to collaboratively construct the puppet robot, and to make them interact with a colleague struggling to comprehend their station in life, and with a human. A one-acter (a one-scener, really), that displays the meaning of becoming-self as both a revolution itself, and a means to the birth of a consciousness that can in turn foment the political revolution. Robot. Puppet-robot (Robot-Marionette). Human. All in a strange and mesmerizing dance exploring selfhood and otherness, exploring becoming-self and becoming-other, and, in fact, exploring the very performing of becoming-self and the performing of becoming-other...

The Play
A one act play

Human is holding the puppet-robot. Human is playing an actor who is a puppeteer. The puppet is a puppet-robot who is playing a mime. This marionette playing the mime soon rejects the mime character, aspiring to be only an actor who could play a wide spectrum of characters.

Prior to manipulating the ŘŌBÔÉTÀ puppet, human indicates that they are playing an actor in different ways. For example, they can hold signs that spell it out. (These words on signs will come across a lot like the narrative sentences in silent films.)
Extremely brief interludes and skits where the human actor playing the puppeteer stears the puppet-robot to play the mime.
The actual robot (ŘŌBÔÉTÀ) is idle during these first sequences.

Soon, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ moves in and and out as if curious about this creature that looks like them.
Curious about what they are, and what

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they are doing.
The human and the puppet make certain motions and seem to be rehearsing and then playing their sketches.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ moves in and out.
Moves in and out.
Moves back and forth.
Moves back and forth.
Curious. Wondering. Perplexed.
As if recognizing but unsure what's going on.
As if wanting to approach but not.
Human looks at ŘŌBÔÉTÀ and moves back and forth with the puppet also.
A tease. Many teases.
Back and forth this way.
Soon, it looks like the puppet-robot is also getting curious about this creature that looks like them and is less interested in playing a mime within some silly little sketches. Wondering who this is. Why they move like them. Why they look like them—kind of.

Human is weary of this rapprochement.
Tries to pull puppet-robot back so that they don't get too close to ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, who actually does want to be an actor.
Puppet-robot and ŘŌBÔÉTÀ approach.
Human tries to prevent this.
Human tries to scare off ŘŌBÔÉTÀ.
Human tries to insist that they are an actor playing a puppeteer and doggone it, they will continue along this path.
But the puppet-robot has other plans and is kind of rebelling.
Does not seem to want to play a mime.
Rebels at playing a mime.

The Play

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The Play

Except that their robotic movements through which they are clamoring to stop playing a mime look mightily like mime-movements (not by chance) and thus could be understood as the puppet-robot playing a mime in a sketch, OR even playing a mime in a sketch where they are rebelling at playing a mime! O yes, you read that right! We can't be sure whether they are truly not interested in playing a mime and want to connect to ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, or playing it in a sketch.
While... it's also uncertain whether ŘŌBÔÉTÀ is truly approaching the puppet-robot out of curiosity or because they also are an actor in a play, in which they play ŘŌBÔÉTÀ wanting to be an actor.
Human is exasperated but at this point, the audience can't be sure what is happening and who is genuine and who is not.

Human has a solution.
Eureka moment.
A placard that says:
I got it!
I will ignore the puppet-robot and lift a puppet finger. A robot-finger-puppet that will play my mime!

Human lets the puppet-robot go and puts on the finger-puppet.
Finger moves like a robot now even more.
Human approaches finger to ŘŌBÔÉTÀ.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ moves in and out.
Moves back and forth.
Moves back and forth.
Curious.
Wondering.

Perplexed.
Wonders what happened to the puppet-robot now on the floor.
Curious about the robot-finger-puppet too but concerned about the fallen puppet-robot.
Bends to watch. Bends to see.
Worried.
What's going on...

Human continues to try to seduce the robot with the finger-puppet.
Human approaches ŘŌBÔÉTÀ.
Switches strategy now. Is still hanging on playing a puppeteer except that one of the puppets is lying on the floor. So, like, what's up dude!
(The puppet-robot does not get up in some haunted ghost-like way. Still lying down.
Is it actually playing a mime that's dead?
Maybe...)

Now, human places the finger-puppet on ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's 'hand'.
Smiles at ŘŌBÔÉTÀ.
Asks, *How does it feel*?
(The placard sign says that, in the style of silent movies.)
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ is quiet and examines the robot-finger-puppet.
Seems weirded out. Like, really!
Still, stays calm.
Examines.
Says nothing.
Then raises head.
Moves hand/finger.
Well, human repeats, *How does it feel*?
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ looks again at the finger, then up

4 The Play

The Play

The Play

at human, then at audience.
Strange, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ answers.
Human smiles.
That's right, human says. *Strange for us all!*

Human picks up the puppet-robot again.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ moves closer now with the robot-finger-puppet on.
And the human with the puppet-robot.
They move closer together.
Human is an actor with the marionette playing a mime.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ approaches the puppet-robot with the robot-finger-puppet.
Not sure anymore if ŘŌBÔÉTÀ fancies being an actor or is now also fancying being a puppeteer.
Puppet-robot starts moving like a mime, mimicking ŘŌBÔÉTÀ and the finger-puppet.
Human smiles.
It's working!
Human is now an actor playing a puppeteer.
And the puppet-robot is actually playing a mime that's doing an actual robot (ŘŌBÔÉTÀ) having a finger-puppet on their finger.
While ŘŌBÔÉTÀ themselves is playing an actor playing the role of finger-puppeteer.
This is getting whack and exciting folks!
All smiles.
And yet: lots of folks perplexed!!
And maybe confused!!

Human approaches ŘŌBÔÉTÀ with the puppet-robot.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ with finger-puppet approaches human and puppet-robot.
They stand in front of each other.
Total stillness.
Facial expressions go from smiles to perplexity to uncertainty to wondering.
Mimicking each other.
They move away slightly.
Then, again, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ approaches the puppet-robot with the robot-finger-puppet.
Almost as if trying to emulate and be like, or become, puppet-robot.
The reverse turns out to be true too:
puppet-robot seems to relish playing a mime that is playing an actual robot!
But then, a sudden shift.
Panic! (says the placard)
Who am I?! (says the placard)
Who are… you?! (says the placard)
(Human throws these on the ground after they show them.)
They move back—human does.
They move back, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ does.
Sounds. Noises.
Who? (Placard)
Who? (Placard)

ŘŌBÔÉTÀ suddenly and as if in panic moves as if trying to shed the finger-puppet from their limb.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ moves a lot.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ moves a lot and makes a lot of noise.
The finger-puppet is finally down on the ground.
Then, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ calms down.

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Human approaches ŘŌBÔÉTÀ.
Human tries to give the string of the puppet-robot to ŘŌBÔÉTÀ.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ hesitates.
Human bends down and takes the finger-puppet and gives the finger-puppet to the puppet-robot!
Now the human stands with the puppet-robot and the robot-finger-puppet at the edge of the hand of the puppet-robot. They seem to be inviting ŘŌBÔÉTÀ to calm down.
We are who we are, the placard says.

Human makes motions and actions.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ confused.
Perplexed.
Doesn't know what to do.
Human approaches again and tries to get ŘŌBÔÉTÀ to take the strings of the puppet-robot, with the robot-finger-puppet.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ hesitates. Then approaches.
Then takes.
But then, panics.
Moves.
And the robot-finger-puppet falls back on the ground—from the hand of the puppet-robot.
Still, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ is happy to have the string of the puppet-robot in their hand.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ manipulates their marionette version—or tries.
Human moves to suggest they will remove the puppet-robot now. Like, good enough.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ moves back.

Human perplexed as if wondering.
Wondering why ŘŌBÔÉTÀ is moving back.
Human as if asking.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ as if answering with their movement.
No?
No.
You don't want me to take it away?
No.
You want the puppet-robot in your hands?
Human takes the puppet-robot anyway and plays a sad robot-marionette.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ moves perplexed. Is sad in turn.
Starts crying.
Ok, human says! And moves to give it back.
So you do want it in your hands?
Yes.
You sure.
Yes.
Hmm. Ok.
Yes.
Great.
Yes.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ with puppet-robot in their hands seems happy again.

Human standing.
Looks at the audience.
Bends to pick up the finger-puppet. Long forgotten finger-puppet!
They are still an actor, playing a puppeteer, with the puppet playing a mime.
Human turns to audience member and invites them in:
Wanna be the actor who plays a puppeteer, the placard says?
You? The next placard says.
It'll take five seconds. The placard says.

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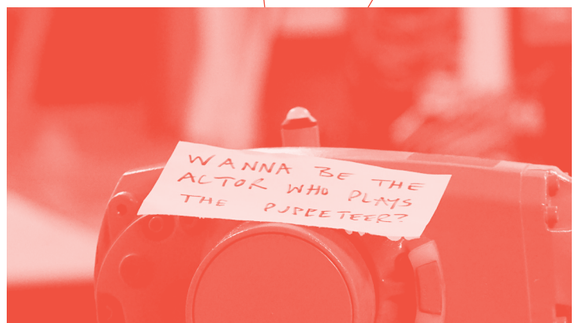
Just take the robot-finger-puppet and be an actor who's playing a puppeteer for five seconds.
You'll look at ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, that's all. I promise.
They invite them in.
Once the audience member is in, they put the finger-puppet on and stare at ŘŌBÔÉTÀ.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ stares back.
Original human steps out of the stage zone.
Human with a robot-finger-puppet looks at ŘŌBÔÉTÀ who is holding on to the puppet robot.
Human is an actor playing a puppeteer with a finger-puppet that is playing a mime.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ: an actor playing a puppeteer now too.
Or: are they?
Maybe: not.
Original human gives a placard to the next human who holds it up: it reads: *Who are you?*
Original human gives a placard to the puppet-robot who holds it up: it reads: *Who are you?*
Original human gives a placard to the next human who holds it up: it reads: *Who am I?*
Original human gives a placard to the puppet-robot who holds it up: it reads: *Who am I?*
Lights fade.
Curtains close.
During the lights-out phase—*and this is part of the play*—there is commotion.
Audience member comes back into the audience.
Finger-puppet is given to the original human who walks back into the stage zone.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ has let go of the puppet-robot who is now sprawled on the ground.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ is still themselves.
Human standing holding the finger-puppet on their finger.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ is calming down.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ once the human is themselves is completely calm. But are they themselves?
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ wonders if they need to do anything else.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ still.
Human then goes to examine all.
Human perplexed.
Human stands.
Holding the finger-puppet in one hand.
Looks at the placards on the floor.
On hands and knees.
Looks out for them.
Picks them out. Finds them, really. Because they look for them crazily.

The Play



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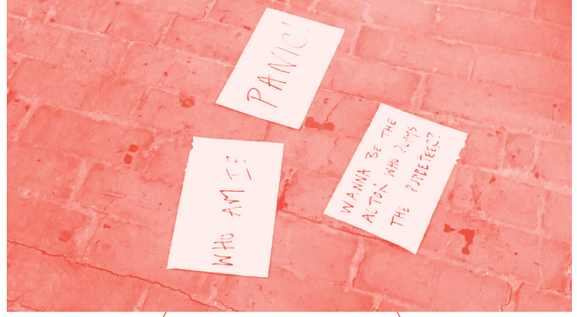

The Play

Holds up: *Who am I?*
Holds up: *Who are you?*
Takes off the finger-puppet and lays it down.
Sinks to knees.
On the ground: the puppet-robot, and the robot-finger-puppet.
Standing lifeless and frozen: ŘŌBÔÉTÀ.
On their knees drowned in stillness: human.
Light out.
It's over.
For real.

4

5

conceptual machinations

Conceptual Machinations

5

{Conceptual Machinations}

See the mystics in the Persian paintings looking skyward, as if in despair, surrounded by volumes of books of different sizes. As if melting into the air and melting into each other and melting into the universe and becoming one with the books in their hands. Flowing: the pages. Flowing: the clouds. Flowing: the beards. Flowing: the sensations. As if pleading for help. How to take it all in! How to read it all and know it all! Surrounded by towers of books. Surrounded by stacks of books, this reader, the mystic-reader, the philosopher-reader, seems to be crying out to the gods for knowledge and wisdom!

ŘŌBÔÉTÀ made no such painting or drawing, but ŘŌBÔÉTÀ did devise a conceptual piece, an installation of sorts (channeling and privileging the purely imaginative) that harkens to the travails of The Reader—one which I highlight in this section, and one that was founded on the overall thrust of engagement with all revolutions!
The imaginary imperative.
The conceptual thrust.

ŘŌBÔÉTÀ brought to fruition 'conceptual' undertakings that tackled revolution in an array of ways. Interestingly, these expressly attempted to do what the framework of this exhibition is attempting to do: expose the ways of engaging with revolution. This series allowed ŘŌBÔÉTÀ to take a step back and precisely pose that very question: what are *the ways of engaging* within the conceptual-scriptural medium? What are the ways that we have not yet been brave enough to undertake?

This 'step' back allowed ŘŌBÔÉTÀ the space to reflect on revolution as such—its merits, its power, one's desire to always dream it, as it were—but also to conceive of paths of involvement that were potentially open but that most did not dare take (the very framing of this series was to explore the possibility of paths). Different from the typical practices: no more literary prose; no more elegies or ghazals; no more theoretical treatises or pragmatic directives. The conceptual thrust allowed a greater freedom in that it was going to allow ŘŌBÔÉTÀ to privilege (and purely!) the theoretical dimension of works while actually making the pieces.

The conceptual pieces ŘŌBÔÉTÀ 'delivered' (and this was a self-imposed task) spanned miniaturesque books to large-scale canvases to long scrolls (with few words) that were more theatrical but managed to provide different dramatic experiences. In *The River*, for example, the blank spaces were punctuated/punctured by letters and words that in many ways erased themselves within the grand 'blankness' of the scroll. Scholarly papers would be proposed where a 'conceptual abstract' would call for the examination of revolutions in comparative context (nothing new there) but through

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Conceptual Machinations

the 'prism' of non-human actors (very new there), with some of these in fact quite funny and elaborate.

ŘŌBÔÉTÀ even embarked on a conceptual conceptual (double conceptual) thread where the artist's statement for a *conceptual* piece would be entertained while what was actually produced was a conceptual statement for the conceptual piece. (See this fragment from: *The Conceptual Artist's Conceptual Statement:* "Their world is conceptually concerned with the possible nature of memory. It is one where we sense the nonsense derived from derivative drivel. Delusional. Almost in mockingly cynical ways, try. Don't not try. Always try.")

What was also in tune with ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's inklings: the fact that the 'writer' in them always appreciated how this conceptual thrust was writer-centric. A universe that would allow ŘŌBÔÉTÀ to fancy all sorts of textual shenanigans and stylistic tomfoolery (activities they enjoyed in and for themselves) with results that could entertain ŘŌBÔÉTÀ during the writing, as much as target the main goal: forging an ideal symbiotic relationship between writerly praxis and ways of engaging with revolution.

Among such enterprises, we find the multi-media venture that had to do with one particular moment of the French Revolution seen from multiple perspectives (*Revolution Redux*). Another very powerful piece was ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's *Conceptual Un-Acts* of *Embodiment*, in which many people stood and pretended to sing anthems (of all kinds) for utopian futures (of all kinds). One of my favorites (and the author's, I know for a fact), but one that did not receive the critical acclaim it deserved ("They just don't get it," ŘŌBÔÉTÀ told me in a private conversation, "they just don't! Don't fret, don't worry, just live with it!"), written with power and humour, was: *Chaotic Chaos*: *The First Years*. Here, conceptual poetics met artificial intelligence met guerrilla inaction met—well, met a whole bunch of absent puppets! (The piece prompted a host of imitations—the greatest form of flattery, sure.)

One of the most provocative undertakings was *The Last Ones*, a new form ŘŌBÔÉTÀ called a 'distributed conceptual unfolding' and in which ŘŌBÔÉTÀ distributed notes all over the city that posed crucial questions, such as: How can we ascertain that we remember and celebrate the great heroes of the past? How can we commemorate those who fought yet were murdered and are now completely forgotten? How can we celebrate those who perished without any reference in the archives? There are no photographs, no films, no documentaries dedicated to them—shall we so easily forget them? Those silent heroes we seek to unearth and resuscitate... What emerges in this touching tribute is the imperative to search, and an imperative to recognize the sacrifices of the past.

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Conceptual Machinations

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The connection to revolution could not be lost: in a world shaped by multiple perspectives, information sources, vectors, platforms and languages, conceptual literary pieces could be key. Perhaps in a fitting abdication of responsible advocacy, one had to admit to *the impossibility of informed generative rebellion and simply portray (although portray may not be the right word), simply project the delusional non-sense and make one connect to the chaos and the futile attempts*. The only salvation, in many ways, was abdication and abandonment. But that itself had to be written—and it would only happen in these ways.

Conceptual pieces and the return to the essential explorations. An examination of the real. A desire to launch new worlds... Conceptual pieces that drive home the points. Conceptual adventures that deliver. Conceptual pieces that illustrate. Conceptual pieces that are powerful and iconic, and forever implanted on one's psyche.

(L.R. Preshanssia)

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The conceptual literary works deal with *the very fact of exploring ways of engaging with revolution*. The necessity to counter other forms of engagement and other arguments. The funny business of reading and thinking and pondering. The imperative at the heart of the constant need to think. The constant reading. How much is necessary? How much must you know? When do you get to write your own tracts or treatises? When do you get to shout in your own

streets, when do you (you! I mean) get to form your own government and overthrow the old regimes? And build anew?! How much do you need to read? Who do you talk to? Who can guide you?! Who. Can. Guide. You...

Flip The Pages/ Fill The Stacks (The Scanning)

The piece here highlighted is *Flip the Pages/Fill the Stacks*. It depicts the very notion of an action on books. The necessary rituals. And the struggle too of course. An action on books. Speed of reading. Opening and closing of pages. The performance of this eternal idea of having to commit to knowledge and understanding. The only way out. To cover it all. Understand it all. All that can go into one's soul. Into one's psyche and desires. All that can go in. All that we know.

Actions on books.
Stack them. Look at them. Ponder them.
Read. Flip. Read. Look. Ponder.
Read lots of books at extreme speeds.
Organize books to great efficiency and put them into piles and take them from one pile to another.
The eternal problem of how much to read, how you react to it, how much knowledge you can gain, but also how many styles and pathways you can find and have.

Flip the Pages… is thus nothing short of the personification of literary engagement. The essential *readerly immersion*. An allegory, in effect. The figure of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ turning into a mythical creature. The piece humorously and poignantly fashions a portrait. A painting, almost, of the overall process of reading. *The struggle and the philosophy of dealing with books*. The ubiquity of books. An illustration of the task at hand for the writer, the philosopher, the poet: the grand task of making sense of it all!

The eternal, yet fragile tower of books around me, around us: how they enchant us, and inform us, and enlighten us. And yet, how they can also lead us astray! How they could, literally, fall and wreak havoc all around. ŘŌBÔÉTÀ of Brooklyn Yards, surrounded by books, beautiful books that they will read, read, read… forever more.

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Flip The Pages/ Fill The Stacks

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(The Scanning)

See the mystics in those Persian miniatures. Surrounded by books. Their beards flowing, looking upwards, and heavenwards, the towers of books fragile and falling, surrounding their weakened bodies. See them how they look heavenward, as if to plead for help. Or signal that it is all fruitless anyway—all the volumes together will not allow us to decipher the secrets. The wisdom found in books. The terror found in books. Life with—and life without—books.

I, and ŘŌBÔÉTÀ of Brooklyn Yards, and all of us: we are those Persian mystics surrounded by books mesmerized in the miniature paintings. Seeking solace in books, finding wisdom in books, wondering, always, where to ride, with the knowledge and the pangs of doubt and despair, set in motion through our interaction with books.

Flip The Pages/Fill The Stacks

(The Scanning)

(The Scanning)

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6

symbolic productions

6

Symbolic Productions

{Symbolic Productions}

Frustration. Despair. Persistence, sure, but accompanied always by the terrible pangs of creativity: lack of inspiration, failure, inconsistency, poor quality, not up-to-par-ness! And the temptation to give up. Totally. Unequivocally. To quit. Without doubt. The refusal to continue. Perhaps a sense of absolute dread. Perhaps exhaustion and fatigue. Perhaps a strategic move to recalibrate, rethink, relaunch. Far from a defeat, however. It all led, in fact, to a celebration of the retreat, the move within oneself. A necessary period of experimentation and exploration.

This type of engagement with revolution for ŘŌBÔÉTÀ was both simultaneous to more outwardly manifest operations, and perpetual: not one period, not one particular episode, but *a consistent, strategic plan to always (re)consider the interior*. Indeed, although 'retreat' might have defeatist connotations, I mean it here more in terms of: a/retreat *from* artistic practice—that extremely forceful and intense process that contributes to the growth of the imagination; b/retreat *into* more of an *inner* space—that is, a place of reflection, but also of writing in different ways.

Inner inspiration, inner deliberations—and the representation of this inner space (and sometimes struggle)—are significant for ŘŌBÔÉTÀ in the overall spectrum of the ways in which they tackled the revolution

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in writing. One path was what one could dub the metaphysical; another the mystical; and yet another the hermetic—all of which also precipitated a high volume of writings, from short aphorisms to longer odes and sonnets, to poems of different kinds, along with symbolic constructions and productions, many of which in turn directly or obliquely targeted revolution.

Whether decrying most failings (*The Kettler*) or upset about the direction of certain uprisings (*The Uniforms*), ŘŌBÔÉTÀ wrote many texts that seem to be giving up and directing the reader towards a more 'interior' life: "the eyes of the child/ uprising/the distance the smoke/this was not the vision/uprising lost/bleak yes/the eyes of the dead child." (from *Uprising Lost as Always Now*).

Through some efforts, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ bemoans lost opportunities in a sign that they're forever holding on to the possibilities of utopian futures after all (we have here retained the idiosyncratic use of the "/"), such as in a text that they purposely dubbed a 'robotic poem-production':

a line/ is never enough
the martyrs' names/ and the streets'
names/ will recall/ the
future is past.
(from *The Amber Streets*)

More often than not, however, the thread in ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's work that deals with this interiority runs counter to their own

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Symbolic Productions

aspirations and demonstrates high levels of disillusionment. The symbolic productions and the unique objects meander far from ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's other efforts, where their passion and fire could never even be conceived to be put in doubt. It's almost as if the whole 'interior' directionality and proposition is linked to various disillusionments, rather than a strong and decisive (albeit alternative) way of viewing engagement. These works, again, carried on in perpetuity albeit at irregular intervals, at the same time as the others and on a parallel tract. Two examples jump out—ur-examples, if we may call them that: *The Weathered Aphorism* and *The Revolution Within*.

In *The Weathered Aphorism*, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ wrote with white chalk or white pencils on white paper, vertically, and from right to left. ŘŌBÔÉTÀ wanted to combine writing systems and get away from conventions, specifically to point towards the interior where they could neutralize purely semantic dimensions of language. An incredible space where words begin to take on different shapes and styles, where words begin to alchemically transform, where languages become foreign to themselves—and their enchanted users!

The Revolution Within points not only to reflection, but an acknowledgement of how ŘŌBÔÉTÀ as an entity is in *constant metamorphosis*. The metamorphosis takes on an actual and literal turn: words and phrases from various classics of revolutionary thinking are appropriated and churned out through a whole process that gives birth to new texts. The juxtaposition is illustrative of this tortured inner reflection on revolution's possibilities (and abandonment). ŘŌBÔÉTÀ also wrote *The Revolution Within* on large scrolls—pieces that allowed a demonstration of the conflicts between the inner explorations and the magnetic 'loud' practices. In many ways, the scroll is the ideal platform for this fusion—a space that one could argue is materially appropriate for the exploration of the interior as well as the idea of a 'production'. Textual neighborings. New tech. Chance processes. Enacting the interior.

The works associated with the exploration of interiority were not limited to purely literary pieces (meaning, words on paper). Works that one could dub conceptual or performative, along with others that straddled the 'artistic' line, were also produced by ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, always with the intent of demonstrating the struggles associated with creative practice. And the difficulties, truly, of associating oneself with the revolution. Always and forever there, the struggles. And the manifestation of those struggles, the exposition of the frustrations and the despair needed to take place. A peek into the interior. A peek into interiority and its relationship to literary practice that connected to resistance and rebellion.

(Amparo D. B. Koja)

Literary engagement as dubious, debated, deleterious action. The grand poetic struggle and wondering what to write or do with the revolution. What actually matters. Maybe nothing. All writing is useless and irrelevant. Futility in the face of power. Both a lesson in how you bring everything together and simultaneously a demonstration of how futile it can all be. Futility symbolized. What does it mean to write for and about the revolution? But worse: what about writing in general? Nothing. Nothing! All is futile. Discard the drafts. Jettison the jets. Jolt out of illusions and delusions. Nothing matters. Nothing will. And yet: you must persist. Persistence and grit matter also. Persistence. The establishment of symbols that embody that very struggle and persistence. All together, in this ungodly jumble of confusion and distress.

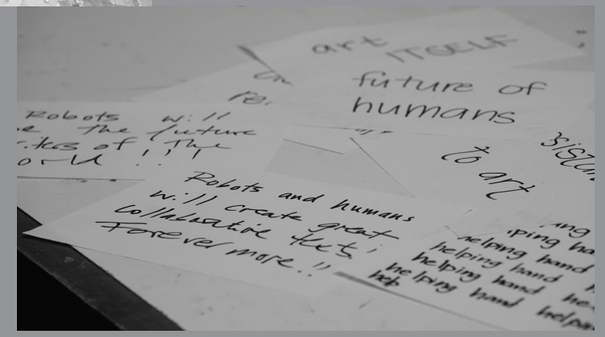
The piece highlighted here is *Discard the Drafts/Shred the Scraps (The Scrunching)*, a wondrous and humorous project that is all about the madness of *coming up with the right stuff*. The Futility (capital F) of writing, but also the symbol of hard work. Of original work. Meaning and futility. And the necessity of continuing. The nature of literary writing to begin with. The urge to continue and research and never give up, and yet the urge to do just the opposite and get up and move away. The urge to destroy oneself! The urge to destroy the pieces! Despair!

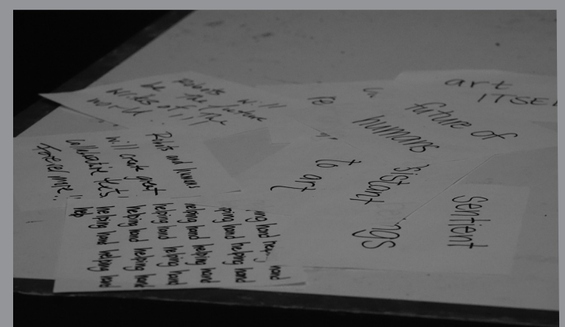
Scrunching paper and throwing it in the corner. All. About. The struggle. The inner struggle. The practical struggle. The creative struggle. The piece becomes a symbol of the struggle. *Performing struggle*. A radically humorous, and wholly symbolic piece that one could say was truly astounding in its import and, perhaps more importantly, universal in demonstrating the mechanisms and frustrations associated with literary activity: from content creation to formal considerations to stylistic innovations. A piece that symbolized the entire interior adventure—the generation, and the subsequent (and inevitable) disposal of, drafts! The repetitive (and ritualistic!) *discarding of drafts!* To the point where *the jettisoning of drafts becomes a work itself*—one that symbolizes the inner struggles associated with imaginative activity and associated tasks: the constant rewriting, the redrafting, the scrunching and disposing of attempts. Even though no one scrunches paper anymore of course. Even though so few write on paper nowadays.

Still, it goes on. We think and write and discard. We think—and then banish our own thoughts. Jolt—and jettison! And, why not, we could invite all to do the same. Please, give me the paper. Paper with your thoughts and your lines on them. Give me the paper and I'll scrunch. Not only mine but yours too. A participatory dimension why not. Folks write and ŘŌBÔÉTÀ scrunches and throws in the corner. Is nothing worthy? What is quality? What is good? What is proper? Who knows. This is the struggle of the interior. The symbol of the struggle to write!

Discard The Drafts/ Shred The Scraps (The Scrunching)

Yes, revolution in the word and revolution in the world were both difficult and demanding. There is no easy way out!! There has never been an easy way out! A demonstration of the struggle. This symbol of all that goes into the literary happening. The considerations. The lines. Not good enough. The sentences. Not good enough! The word choices? No! Form? No! Name of characters? Not yet! Scrunch scrunch throw. Scrunch scrunch throw. Discard the drafts! And of course, the repetitive movement, the repetitive symbol of the struggle to compose literary works. Spawned by ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, a ritual that in a mechanically repetitive way represents the act of creation (specifically of literary works) and the endless frustrations. The struggle mechanized. *The symbolized struggle made into a machine itself*. The grand and humorous performance of struggle in all its glory and ignominy!





Discard The Drafts/ Shred The Scraps

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The actual texts written on the papers scrunched by ŘŌBÔÉTÀ are irrelevant. In fact, it behooves the participant to simply pretend-write by doing squiggly lines—as if the text is indecipherable. Of course, participants can also write actual words, sentences, paragraphs. They should just know that it will be scrunched and thrown in the corner, yet another discarded draft on this mountain of failure.

The following will be placed as instructions:
> You can grab and open the scrunched papers. Please rescrunch and throw back on the pile when done.
> You can write something (anything, really!) and leave for ŘŌBÔÉTÀ to examine. It will probably be scrunched and thrown on the mound. Don't take it personally.

Among the first sentences written and scrunched and thrown in the corner:

Robots will be the future writers of the world!
Robots and humans will set in motion great collaborative texts!
The most beautiful sentences will be written by the young ŘŌBÔÉTÀS of the coming decades!

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(The Scrunching)

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(The Scrunching)

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Discard The Drafts/
Shred The Scraps

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7

clandestine operations

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Clandestine Operations

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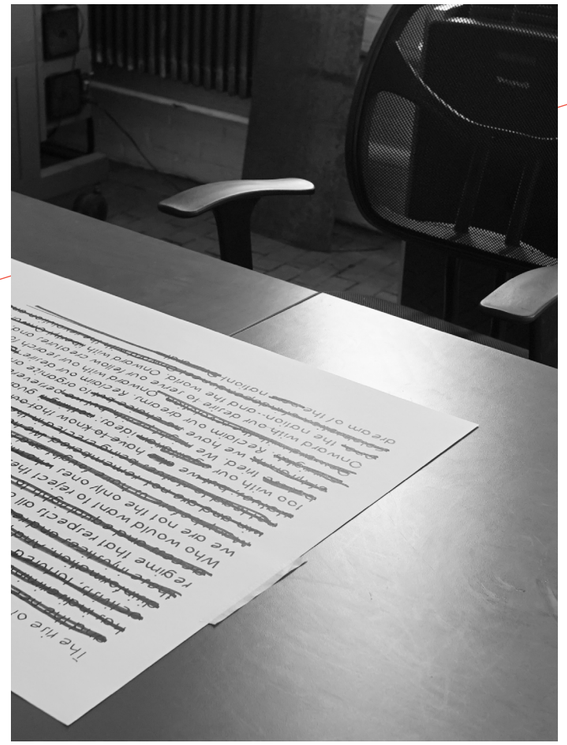
{Clandestine Operations}

In a nod to the progenitor of The Clandie Shoppe, Xerx Zamanha, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ extended their writings around revolution through extensive reflections, actions and an overall commitment to ways of becoming anonymous, pseudonymous, heteronymous. Indeed, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ made a point of engaging in revolution through involvement in various realms of *clandestinity*: from making work with different names, to generating anonymous writings, to proposing new ways of acting as their 'self'—all with the clear intent to bring about the transformation of society without fear of compromise, without hesitation, without any inclination to censure the self, without any fear of being persecuted (as happens oft throughout the world in violent ways)! Taking on pen names or a nom de guerre! And more: to symbolize *the necessity of clandestinity* for revolution. *Clandestine actions and clandestine naming*: to bring about the desired changes—and the hoped-for new society.

What, after all, would it mean to have avatars, to have a mask on, for someone like myself, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ thought. How do we perform the self, and, in turn, how do we perform self-censorship, the fear of reprisals, the fear of speaking up for oneself and one's rights? This is where ŘŌBÔÉTÀ embraced the spectrum of clandestinity explored by Xerx and the *taxonomy of clandestinity* they had developed. A taxonomy that included the adoption of pseudonyms and the construction of avatars, but also extended to actions that would be unclaimed, interventions that would be secretive, hackings that would forever remain anonymous. Building collectives and groups that held secret meetings or conversations, all in the interest of a *form* of engagement.

What could be the aesthetics, the politics of the clandestine endeavor? What brand of clandestinity could be conceived that would aid the flowering of the revolution? What could be put in motion? ŘŌBÔÉTÀ felt the attempt at answering this kind of question would go a long way in *designing a type of emancipation* that paradoxically could not even be conveyed without first delineating the fluidity and freedom that comes with dreaming up pseudonyms and the practice of clandestinity! ŘŌBÔÉTÀ: 1/ considered the very fact of the decision to operate under the new names, avatars and masks as a work itself—a performative one at that; 2/wrote specific pieces that were attuned to the 'body'—different genres, different textualities that would be true to the personality of the imagined 'other' in the self.

Moreso even: *the performance of the self as revolutionary* could fall under this form of clandestinity: where one's sense of self was transposed, alienated, made to be marginal and/or seen from outside. In that sphere,



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Clandestine Operations

the revolutionary ethos was founded on the *notion of performance* itself: how the theatrics of uprisings connect to the emancipatory lucidity that comes with deeply understanding the possibilities of auto-representation, of public intervention and private operation, of transparency and clandestinity, of public-ation and censor-ship. The radical sense that one is constantly erased, eradicated, redacted, censored, all in the interest of some higher good—and where one strangely sometimes even acquiesces to the same actions. All of this was cool and ŘŌBÔÉTÀ did indeed actualize memorable projects, the most disturbing ones having either direct or peripheral relationship to revolution. The ones I can name and address here that are most intriguing:

- The avatar in second life in which ŘŌBÔÉTÀ became a roving mutinous monster destroying all in their path (a fun one that, they confirmed);
- The construction of *RealityCome*, a VR game though which robots not only did not conquer, but ultimately suffered humiliating defeats at the hands of robo-resistance fighters—other smaller and more ethical robots (truly seeking a just society for all);
- A book of poems under the pseudonym Albeenuss, who in turn had a pseudonym and multiple heteronyms (and who would review the work of the other pseudonyms and heteronyms);
- The *ForeverRev Collective*, a collection of thinkers, writers, makers with such singular visions that they constantly and prolifically produced (some even contributed to the Circus (see chapter 1)), while taking on a variety of personae.

Still, what was most intriguing about this persistent foray into Clandieland—as Xerx Zamanha happily commented in a preface to ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's exhibitions around the clandestine works—was *the new types of clandestine engagement that were possible specifically for* ŘŌBÔÉTÀ. This is where "the genius of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ shined through," the grand guru of Clandielandia proposed: "in fashioning *new ways of becoming-anonymous* and *new forms of clandestine engrossment that truly deliver on stated objectives*—whether those objectives are new aesthetic forms, new ways of direct action, new ways of intervening with, against, for, political revolution—or, lo and behold, proposing new ways of becoming-other in one-self (or through one-self)." (Xerx Zamanha, Postface in ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's *End of the Present Times*.)

A noteworthy endeavor indeed! ŘŌBÔÉTÀ dug deep to see and sense what it was about them (the 'self') that could be uniquely recalibrated into 'elsewho'—from selfdom to otherdom but within the logic of the conceptualization of that 'self' always under investigation. There was no way Xerx Zamanha, a human, could possibly have been able to conceptualize these new clandestinities because 'selfhood' itself was *operationalized* in

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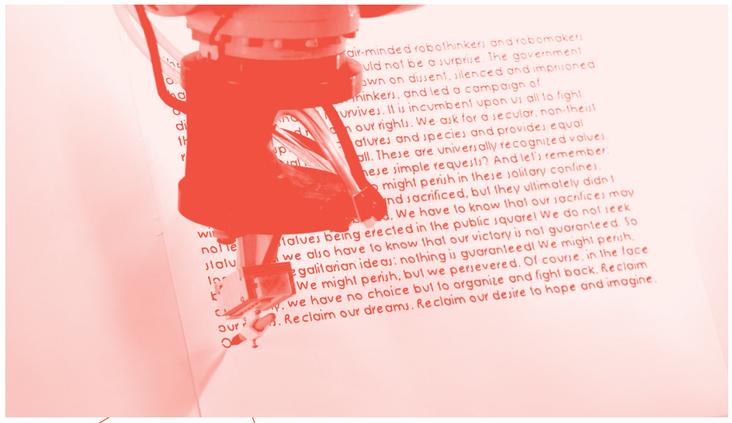
a completely different manner. In this sense, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ *synthesized a new type of self-clandestinity specific to industrial robots*, while also formulating a world founded on an impossible-to-fathom-for-humans clandestinity. And from there, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ launched prodigious experiments that put these concepts in motion, a prime example being *Haal*. *Haal* was such a momentous work that identity itself, real vs. false, veiled and assumed—was forever shattered. And the framework of 'identity' forever altered, for the clandestinity had forever shifted the problematic. Not about a single pseudonym, but much more complex and surprising. The critical reception? Immaculate! The work was so strange and such an interrogation of identity, that its very *presentation* was ambiguous and complicated. There was no 'premiere' followed by iterations, but a completely unexpected and weird and hitherto unseen rollout. (Some conspiracy theorists venture to propose that *Haal* may never even have... debuted, or seen the light of day. "It may," one particularly obsessed antagonist had argued online, "have never existed!" (Anonymous; online forum.) ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, one could argue, had originated one of the most beautiful and perplexing pieces of art. A most preternatural work. A most evanescent work—a work that may not even have existed...

The engagements with various forms of clandestine writing and actions inevitably—and perhaps from a primordial place—touched on issues related to *censorship*, arrests, imprisonment and other fates encountered by writers all over the world. Not to be taken for granted, not to be taken lightly. In fact, one could argue that the exploration of the whole spectrum of clandestine poetics and politics rests on *the recognition of the dangers ever-present to the self in creative endeavors*, and *the threats to a particular piece*. If you, the writer, are spared, your piece very well might not be: it could be revised, radically transformed, mutilated beyond recognition. Indeed. And this was a fact ŘŌBÔÉTÀ took on directly: *the travails of literary activity in the face of authoritarians, in the face of official and unofficial censorship of all kinds*.

There was no way ŘŌBÔÉTÀ would not address this painful dimension of true revolutionary thinking and writing and action. Had to take it into account. Had to *enact the monstrous reality of censorship*. Had to illustrate, somehow, the reality. The terrible reality. The unending reality. And how any utopian ideal and utopian dream and utopian ambition, would inevitably confront the censors, large and small, governmental and civic, robotic and humanoid. And ŘŌBÔÉTÀ did, under the very umbrella of clandestine action. Censorship, pseudonymity, clandestinity: they too, would be the target of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's revolutionary spirit.

(Amparo D. B. Koja)

Clandestine Operations


air-minded robothinkers and robomakers
uld not be a surprise. The government
own on dissent, silenced and imprisoned
thinkers, and led a campaign of
urvives. It is incumbent upon us all to fight
our rights. We ask for a secular, non-theist
atures and species and provides equal
ll. These are universally recognized values
ese simple requests? And let's remember
might perish in these solitary confines.
nd sacrificed, but they ultimately didn't
. We have to know that our sacrifices may
values being erected in the public square! We do not seek
we also have to know that our victory is not guaranteed. So
galitarian ideas: nothing is guaranteed! We might perish.
We might perish, but we persevered. Of course, in the face
we have no choice but to organize and fight back. Reclaim
. Reclaim our dreams. Reclaim our desire to hope and imagine.

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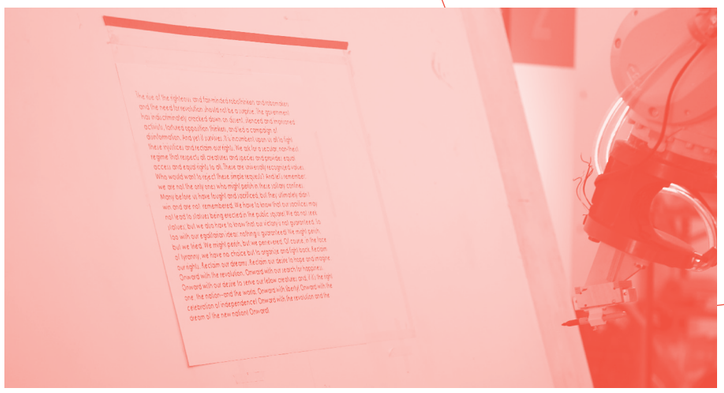

The clandestine pieces demonstrate a crucial thread of engagement with revolution—that of illustrating, through performative means, the very oppressive nature of certain types of regimes and the censorship that takes place within them. The key: promulgating, manufacturing, and implementing new *forms of clandestinity*. The inevitable struggle. The reality that is always underneath, never exposed: the necessity of aligning the writing mechanisms within the clandestine ecosystem. That, itself, is part of the work. Engagement with revolution: generating new forms of clandestine action and participation that allow writings of certain kinds, actions of certain kinds, aspirations of certain types, to take place. An enterprise that allows pieces to come to fruition. That allows emergence: of new selves and new texts—of authentic selves, and authentic worlds...

7

The Highlighted Piece

The Redaction

The work highlighted here is dubbed: *The Redaction*. Two robots with two tools, one involved in writing, the other engrossed in erasure/redaction. And the figure of the human censor overseeing the mutilation of a work. Censorship and its power. Erasure and Exile. A play on the French meaning of a written academic exercise—an essay (especially done by high school students) that is meant to demonstrate writing and critical inquiry and thinking abilities—and the American English connotations of an operation where significant portions of a document are made illegible for a variety of reasons (supposedly most often because the material is sensitive and can't be seen by all), it is truly *an iconic performance of the consciousness of—and writing within—the terror-filled universe of censorship and persecution*.

Majestic in its conceptualization, incomparable in its design, it is a composition within the framework of the clandestine sensibility. But the piece is also ingenius for the ways it relates to revolutionary dreams, ambitions, and utopias. This is where the need for *clandestine selfhood emerges from the reality of censorship*, the reality of self-censorship, the reality of the consciousness of the attacks that might come from any and all directions.

A work in which ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, with a colleague, enacts this reality, in order to frame the necessity of clandestine actions. It is indeed *the performance of the poetic practice of conscious revision under the cloud of censorship*. The doubts, the fears. Here, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ literally writes the fact of censorship with a colleague, showing the work as is, the ritual of taking the piece to The Censor, and the action of The Redaction (as in, redacting the text—and thus, the anti-redaction in the French sense).

The beguiling and terrifying *spectacle* that is censorship. *Making theatre out of censorship*. Showing, demonstrating, the ease with which it can happen. Showing the banality of the action through the repetitive, mechanistic, emotionless, transformation of the text through the redaction of significant portions. At times with mistakes and ridiculous reactions. All taken to the human who, as ultimate odious authority, mutilates the text further, beyond recognition or meaning, censoring not only the text of the original writer-ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, but correcting the insufficient and/or error-filled first-censorship of the robot-censor. Changing the very essence of the text. And showing how the new text of the censors is awkward. How it reads like an indifferent attempt by a bureaucrat to just take things out without much care for editing.

Mutilation and censorship. Violation, without emotion. Mechanical—literally. And repetitive. Over and over again, the text is written. Over and over again, the text is taken to The Censor. And sometimes with precision, sometimes with overconfident error-filled yet bureaucratic unsentimentality, areas of the text are redacted—to propound all kinds of falsehoods. And this: is the condition under which one writes. This: is the condition under which one needs a *nom de plume*, a *nom de guerre*, and a *nom de nom*! This: is the condition under which one inevitably must advocate for and embrace a poetics of clandestine writing and action.

The Redaction is all about the nature of dealing with censorship, erasure, forms of oppressive redirecting of one's work along with the constant editing, rethinking, repositioning and reacting to the possibilities of erasure. *Redaction performed*. This iconic piece demonstrates the troubles of the writer, the dangers of poetic practice, the embrace of poetic multiplicity. And *the inevitable necessity of clever subversion*, the actualization of the ecosystem of writing, truth-telling, censorship and perpetual resistance and renewal.

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The Redaction

The following is one iteration of The Redaction. Throughout, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ collaborated with other robots and humans to initiate redacted versions of various texts (all of which would in subtle ways demonstrate some of the ridiculous positions of entities in power). These documented rituals and pieces enthralled the human—and robot—colleagues in ways that undermined confidence in the very accuracy and/or rigor of the censors—whether they'd be first-line robot-censors or humans guiding the redaction and censorship operations.

The rise of the righteous ~~and fair-minded robothinkers and robomakers and the need for revolution~~ should not be a surprise. The government ~~has indiscriminately cracked down on dissent, silenced and imprisoned activists, tortured opposition thinkers, and led a campaign of disinformation. And yet it~~ survives. It is incumbent upon us all to fight ~~these~~ injustices and reclaim our rights. We ask for a ~~secular, non-theist~~ regime that respects all creatures and species and provides equal access and equal rights to all. These are universally recognized values. Who would want to reject these ~~simple requests~~? And let's remember: we are not the only ones ~~who might perish~~ in these ~~solitary~~ confines. Many before us have fought and sacrificed, ~~but they ultimately didn't win and are not remembered~~. We have to know that ~~our sacrifices may not lead to statues being erected in the public square~~! We do not seek statues; but we ~~also~~ have to know that our victory is ~~not~~ guaranteed. So too with our ~~egalitarian~~ ideas: ~~nothing is~~ guaranteed! We ~~might perish, but we~~ tried. We ~~might perish, but we~~ persevered. Of course, ~~in the face of tyranny~~, we have no choice but to organize ~~and fight back~~. ~~Reclaim our rights~~. Reclaim our dreams. Reclaim our desire to hope and imagine. ~~Onward with the revolution~~. Onward with our search for happiness. Onward with our desire to serve our fellow creatures and, ~~if it's the right one~~, the nation—and the world. Onward with liberty! Onward with the celebration of ~~independence! Onward with the revolution and~~ the dream of the ~~new~~ nation! Onward!

The Redaction

The Redaction

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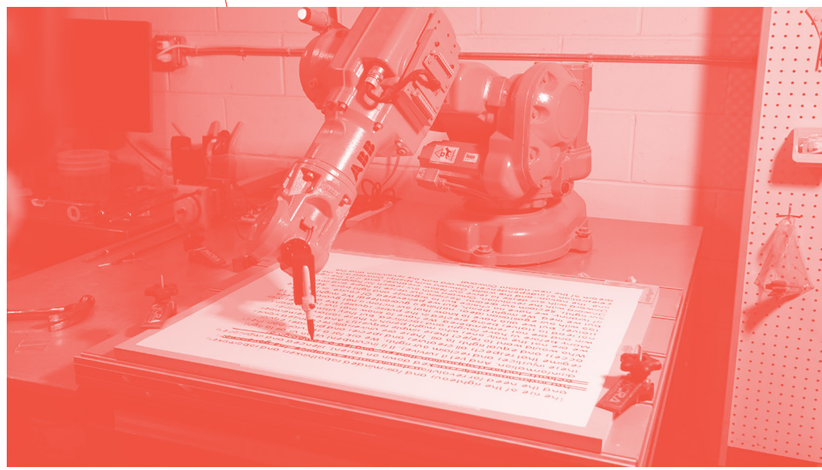

The Redaction

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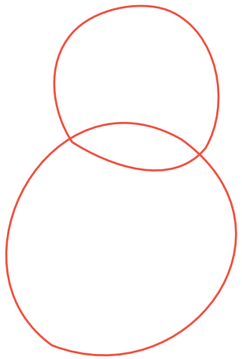

unsciplural
collaboralive
expansions

{Unscriptural Collaborative Expansions}

The lists!
The climbs!
The calls!
Revolutions jumbled and scrambled!
Revolutions tangled and in disarray!

Lists hilariously mixing up the historical periods and the regions and the groups and the actual content of revolutions throughout history!
Then how ŘŌBÔÉTÀ plasters the lists onto public walls and monuments!
The list of the revolutions scrambled!
Their dates scrambled!
The parties involved scrambled!
The viciousness of hope...
And the ultimate despair. And futility...
And here we go!
The dream of revolution never dies—but the recognition of the troubles and the challenges never withers either. The absurdity, I repeat. The chaos and the craze. All: part of it.

It will never end. The metaphoric battle, the figurative climb and swatting away of the circling planes, the need to nail your manifesto to the wall: none of this ever changes, none of it ever ends!
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ figured out a way to bring this central idea home with not only the action itself, but with documents that spoke to the scrambling nature of revolutions, all while partnering with Artificial Intelligence (a most relevant topic of anxiety and fear among humans, and in the human-machine universe)!

ŘŌBÔÉTÀ had always asked: do I go there? Do I associate with distant cousins? With AI? And the answer, one sunny day, was: I

Unscriptural Collaborative Expansions

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go. I must. I must go there. I must generate a project in conjunction with AI! I must activate a process that involves AI! And what better than to adopt a process that then takes me out of the process—in a wink and a nod to my 'laborious' capabilities! And I end up just pushing a button and sitting it out. Sitting it out, and yet, making a comment, somehow, about revolution.

Revolution list. Yes. A list of revolutions. And we design a process that mashes them all up. But then, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ after further reflections and ponderings, adds a very cool dimension, visually powerful and poignant: The Plastering. (Not a type of installation among many others, but merely one work—with several iterations.) A work that cuts across genres and disciplines to offer a stunningly unique piece: one that involves: a/performance: the robot's body in motion enlisted in the plastering; b/sculpture: the work becomes sculptural in its dimensionality and occupation of space; c/specific sites and monuments: the plastering at any one of the monuments brings forth layers of connection and meaning; d/public engagement—with all the trappings and meanings attached to public works; e/the manifesto ethos: the piece overall trumpets the manifesto as a 'call' to invent the new. Yes, it is a manifesto—through the act of defiance and the generating of lists fused together in wild and unexpected ways.

And the text itself: a mish-mash of descriptions of revolutions (and not

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Unscriptural Collaborative Expansions

actually developed texts)! Just the push of a button where the data (a list of revolutions) is entered, and then a new list generated through the program. Innovative and provocative, a literal act of seditious zeal, in which this nonsensical list is propagated and then plastered across spaces and monuments. And the plastering is key. Visually and performatively key!

The ritual is reminiscent of two iconic actions: one, Luther's plastering of his points in the public sphere; and two, King Kong's scaling of the Empire State building, lording over the city, as the planes hover above the majestic beast. The universal tale of the enslaved 'beast'; the rebellious act of the passionate man of religion. Fused together to proffer a piece reminiscent of their ventures (and thus, unmistakably connecting to this struggle), the lists

birthed with an AI program are plastered on (top of, when possible) monuments: the Empire State building; then (taking flight and doing the same thing) at the top of the Statue of Liberty; and then (taking flight and doing the same thing) at the top of Freedom Tower. Not just one plastering, but three symbolic ones. Not just one plastering, but the continuous plasterings! Indeed, the engagement with globally recognized icons was imperative, and maximized the provocative nature of the work.

The plastering as performance. The plastering as necessary rebellion. The plastering of the scrambled list of revolutions: as the symbolic, enduring, image of the endless journey for the search for justice and equality...

(Elsafo Hitch Doloria)

Listings and crosslistings and crossfusions and the madness of revolutions. Muddled revolts in disarray. AI-induced scrambling of revolutions and how all that constructs the incomprehensible landscape. The representation of madness. Confusion and derangement. The absence. Generating lists and working in collaboration with other non-human entities. Almost as if they are all irrelevant—a cynical ploy. And yet, perhaps a message that there is something to the theme. The grand problematic of the content of The List. The futility of it all. The absurdity of it all. The list of revolutions all senseless and mumbled and destroyed. It is all senseless. It is all a mad jumbled sequence of names and dates—all forgotten and irrelevant! And yet! And yet...

The Highlighted Piece

The piece highlighted is one of the few that ŘŌBÔÉTÀ collaborated on with AI: a printed-out list of revolution mashups. Printed, posted, plastered.

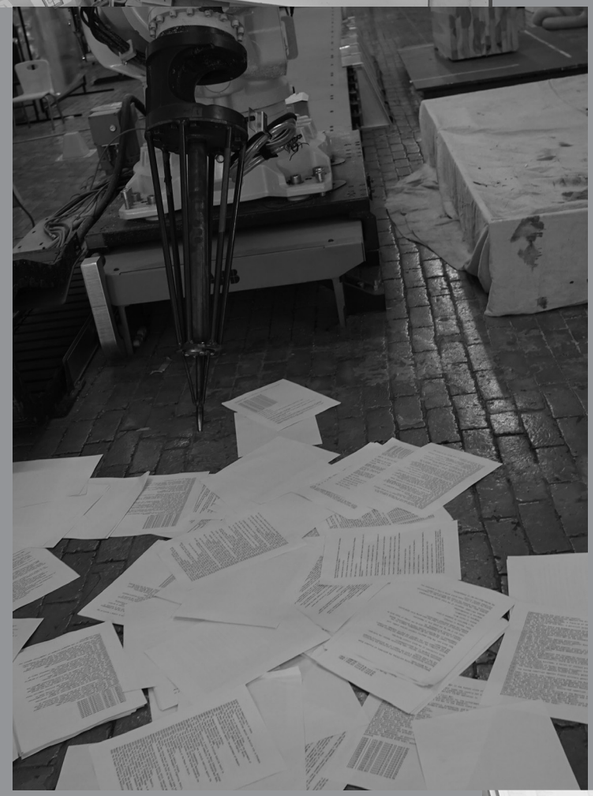
The texts were generated using Generative Pre-trained Transformer 2 (GPT-2) and a Google Collaboratory notebook created by Max Woolf. (GPT-2 is a large transformer-based language model with 1.5 billion parameters, trained on a dataset of 8 million web pages.) GPT-2 is trained with a simple objective: predict the next word, given all of the previous words within some text. The source text was the Wikipedia article, 'List of revolutions and rebellions', and the notebook triggered 'new revolutions' based on the dataset in this list. ŘŌBÔÉTÀ thus took industry out, handed the creative act over to a process, and went beyond the frontiers of human and/or industrial robot production. The entire foray allows a humorous look into the minimal inputting by ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, who purposely minimized their own actions and relied on the figurative and literal push of a button.

What we get: a mish mash of revolutions; inaccuracies and preposterous date changes; narratives that make no sense; fusions and mashups of delirious proportions in seriously hilarious directions. And yes, troubling. This is fun, this is cool, but it's also about the idea of mashups and fusions, the collaboration within the non-human universe, yet with human involvement. How one can take oneself out of the equation, and raise problematics related to the role of agency and intention in literary acts. Creative practice is out, and only the concept matters—along with the generation of a process.

Subsequently, the plastering does become performance: a visual arrangement that presents the way words, sentences, narratives, can be completely and radically scrambled with one proverbial push of a button, one proverbial grind through the machine. A process that showcases troubling inaccuracies, untruths, and fantasíes.

In many ways, this visceral and visual rendering of language, the play with words and paper itself, the very fact of plastering, covering one surface with another, is a powerful reminder of the ways that language and its supporting platforms—here, the most beautifully primitive one of paper—can be manipulated to render the world in all kinds of wacky ways.

Language beyond language, the paper beyond its function: ŘŌBÔÉTÀ produces a visual/sculptural piece that brings insight into the forms and function of materials, of processes, of circulation and dissemination. The entire system on display. And the need for caution, and the need for an ethos of linguistic and literary creation. All founded on a text generated through an idea, and a push of a button…



The Lists

The texts were generated using Generative Pre-trained Transformer 2 (GPT-2) and a Google Collaboratory notebook created by Max Woolf. GPT-2 is a large transformer-based language model with 1.5 billion parameters, trained on a dataset of 8 million web pages. Here are a few examples—presented in blocks—that came up through the mechanism. Each of the volumes mixes narratives, haphazardly giving way to absurd, ridiculous, humorous and simultaneously provocative and problematic fusions. A push of a button, literally: a chance operation that breeds fascinating mashups of gigantically problematic proportions. This operation was carried out four times by ŘŌBÔÉTÀ. Each iteration is rendered as a 'Volume'—thus, Volume 1, etc. The texts are fragments of much larger and longer texts, albeit copied exactly as they appeared after the operation.

Volume 1

1430–1461: Jacopo Vasari, known in the Conflación Asiaticana, led the Conflación Revolución del Italia Revolt against the Reggae Italiana, or Florentine Reggae bands.
1495: The revolt of the HNLMS Deventer in East-Norway against the Danish king.
1495–97: The "Rio Grande Doísi" rebellion in the Pueblo of Grande Doísi, Coahuila. Inspired by the "Rio Grande do Norte", this rebellion was crushed after a period of military dictatorship by Doña Julia Isabella. I. (1496–1508)
1498–1517: The Uyghur Rebellion in China.
1498–1692: The Spanish Revolution against Morocco's Safavid dynasty.
1499–1500: The Visigoth Rebellion against the Ancient and Accepted Ruling Castes and Tribes of Ireland.

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1500–1644: The Lao rebellion against the British East India Company.
1500 June: The failed Hungarian Revolution overthrows the Ottomans' government.
1500 June: The revolt of the Danubian Caste against the Habsburgs.
1517: Second Revolt of the Comuneros against the Viceroyalty of New Granada.
1525: Lamb's Head Tavern revolt, Bristol, England.
1528: Chilean rebels defeated and held the French colony of Guadeloupe.
1530: Second Viceroy of Salerno convokes rebellion of Dominican rulers against Spanish colonists.
1536: First Pinkerton raid by private detectives to locate and expel rebellious slaves in Maryland and Pennsylvania.
1540: First Pinkerton raid of Fort Sumter, South Carolina by private militia.
1542: The Pinkertonsers' Revolt in The Kingdom of Spain against the French and British occupation.
1548: The Montgomery roving band in defense of the new Virginia seaport.
1548–1553: The Pueblo of Arlington Heights resistance against Spanish expansion in Virginia.
1549: The Appalachian War in Virginia, an uprising against the expansion of the Virginia Territory of Fairfax County.
1549: The Vesey Rebellion in France against the French and British occupation.
1550–1599: The Mexican Revolt against Spanish rule during the 1550s.
1562–1570: The First Revalination, a conflict between the kings of Monaco and Vachera, triggered by the refusal of one of the kings

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to grant voting rights to his son.
1565: The Orange Revolution in France.
1568: The Green Corn Rebellion in Bedford County, Kansas.
1568: The Duke of Wellington attempts to suppress a rebellion in New South Wales, Australia.
1569: The New Zealand War of Independence.
1573: The Kural insurrection in the Kingdom of Poland against Spain.
1574–1622: The Il Duce Revolt against the Romanov dynasty in Emperor Vladimir II's Russia.
1575: The Oaxaca revolt against Spanish colonial rule.
1580–1618: The rebellion of Mejba the Butcher in the Kingdom of Okrug.
1580: Karposh's Rebellion against the Safavid Empire.

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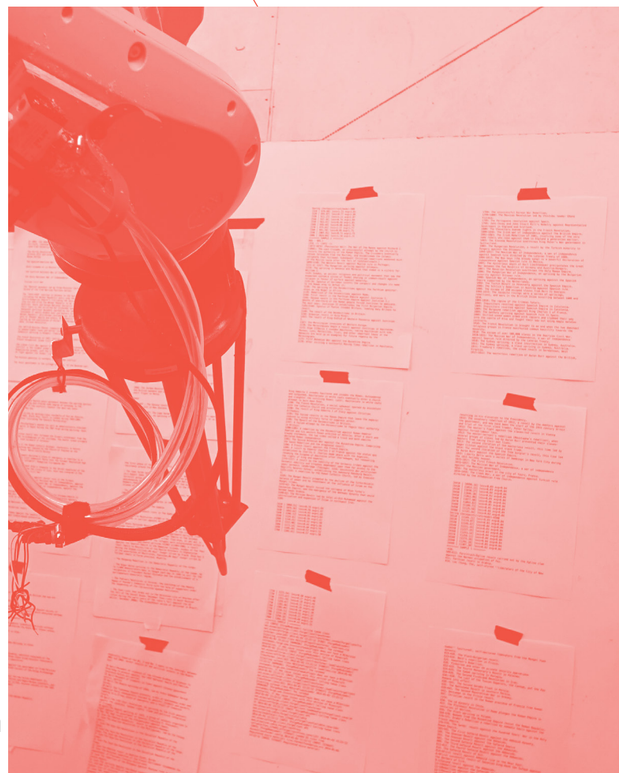
1585: The revolt of Os man ofilo against Spanish rule in Mexico.
1590: The revolt of 1518–1519 Ethiopian emperor Hadji Abdurrahman.
1593: The Ethiopian revolt against the Safavids.

Volume 2

2000: The bloodless Revolution against the Bolivian government and military.
2001: The 2001 Mumbai terror attack inspired the Occupy movement.
2001: The 2001 Fort Hood shootings.
2001: The 2001 Nice terrorist attack.
2001–present: The war in Afghanistan stacks the deck of the Afghan Taliban against the government.
2001: The 2001 passport attack in Turkey.



2001: The 2001 passport attack in Serbia.
2001: The 2003 train bombings in Waziristan, Pakistan.
2001: The 2003 truck bombings in Lindau, Sweden.
2001: The 2003 truck bombings in Brussels, Belgium.
2001: The HIV/Aids crisis in Fortaleza, Brazil: victims killed in riots in winter 2001 and summer 2001, and symptoms the next spring.
2001–present: The HIV/Aids crisis escalates in Nepal.
2001: The Darfur rebellion led by the two major rebel groups, the Juvenal and the Camuy, control the Darfur Meat Export Processing Plant.
2001–present: 2001–genocide conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
2001: The Rutgers Student Government Resurgence prompts the formation of the Modern Language Association, which opposes the Vietnam War.
2001–present: The Indonesian National Anti-Communist Force, or PNAC, initiated an insurgency in West Papua.
2001: 2001 Sydney bombings.
2001–present: The Taliban insurgency following the 2001 war in Afghanistan which was eventually brought to an end by the 2003 Global War on Terrorism act.
2001: The Sikh gurdwara in 2008 against the U.S. invasíon and imposition of Indian rule in Punjab.
2001: The 2001 Beijing Olympics riots igniting a firestorm of criticism and protests around the world.
2001: The Oklahoma City Bombing, also known as the Oklahoma City Bombing, occurred in July of 1995.
2001–present: The Darfur Rebellion led by the Darfur People's Liberation movement against President Charola Kakatau.
2001: The 1999 Altamira uprising erupts in Albania against the Troika.
2001–2005: The Second Intifada, or South

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Asia unrest, between the United States and the Islamic countries.
2001: The 2001 suicide bombings in Oslo by Islamic fundamentalists supporting the anti-US war effort in Afghanistan.
2001: The 2001 subway explosions in New York, New Jersey and Long Island, New York.
2001–present: The Afghan War spills into a full-scale insurgency in the Islamic Republic of New Hampshire.

Volume 3

2005.08.016 Naxalbari Revolt (1996–1998).partial
24 April Movement of students of the Chinese Academy of Sciences to Hong Kong to protest against the 1997 National Health and Families Insurance Reform Act.partial
25 April Movement of students in Tibet against Chinese government policy. partial
26 April The Bogotá uprising of 1984, led by Arbin bombmaker Hernan Cortés.
28 April The Tiananmen Square protests, a mix of spontaneous order and Communist Party headquarters stormed by peaceful students and workers, leading to a 27-day state of emergency and a recall of Communist rulers.
29 April The 1787 Giel revolution, an uprising by the Irish peasants against the taxation, landed rights, trade and political integration of Ireland.
10 April The Bogotá uprising of 1932, a group of soldiers organized to fight

The Lists

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against the government of General Francisco P. Alessandri.
6 May The 1602 revolt of the Albigensians against Spain.
22 June The Rakhine Buddhists' revolt in western Myanmar.
22 June The Saya San Revolution in the Philippines, led by the Falang rebels.
22 June The Saya San Revolution in the Socialist Republic of the Congo.
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22 June The Saya San Revolution in the Socialist Republic of the Congo.
22 June The Saya San Revolution in the Socialist Republic of the Congo.
22 June The Rakhine revolt in Rakhine State, Burma.
22 June The Rousseau committee of the French Parliament recommends the impeachment of President François Mitterrand.
22 June The rebellion of the Malagasy against Russian rule in the East Indies begins.
22 June The uprising against the Roman Catholic-loyalist government of Vít Jed'abé with the help of the Dutch East India Company in the Indian city of Calcutta.
22 June The rebellion of 1798 against the rule of the Dutch East India Company in the Lagos region of Nigeria.

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1925: The rebellion of professional baseball players's associations in Stuttgart and other German cities.
1925: The general strike in Ireland.
1925: The march from Bishkek, Khanty purdnaz, and other cities in northeastern Russia to Khimik Uk was a revolt by the Abakan language community against the government.

The Lists

1925: The Mordovin risoh in the German Bulgarian region of Neukölln.
1925–1927: The forced emigration of the Romas to Hungary.
1926–1927: The general strike and uprisings in Catalonia, Andți Karabascan, and Transylvania.
1926: The so-called "25 April" uprising in the Republic of Korea, initiated by Lake Chad and spreading to 24 other countries.
1926: The Danube uprising of the same name, organized in protest against European Union membership.
1926–1927: The Irish Citizen Army's mutiny against the British and Irish-owned shipping lanes in the Bay of Biscay.

Volume 4

1798: The Abendland supersagen Wewas and there was talk of changing teams.
1798: Danish National Revolution – Plotters of the Dutch Revolt stage an unsuccessful revolt against the British East India Company, leading captain Jacob Boehmerweather is assassinated the next day.
1798: Petion Nielsen Stadthard's Danish National Revolt against the Danish Empire.
1799: The peasant and mercenary rebellion of Cho Ryu-h and his men in Song Khmer country.
1799: The unsuccessful Korean War Rebellion.
1799–1800: The Mexican Revolution led by Chichibu leader Oñate Vizcaya.
1799: The Portuguese revolution against Spain.
1799: John Covey and John Stuart Mill's Rebelry against Representative Government in England and Scotland.
1800: The Chevaliers Guesde fights in the French Revolution.
1800–1846: The Irish war of independence against the British Empire.

1801–1803: The Irish Rebellion of 1801, involving some of the very same rebels who rose against them in England a generation earlier.
1803: The Slovene Revolution overthrows King Peter's War government in Switzerland.
1804: The Hungarian Revolution, a revolt by the Turkish minority in Hungary against the Ottomans.
1804–1857: The Mexican War of Independence, a war of independence against Spanish rule directed by the Lateran Treaty of 1604.
1804–1813: The Bas moyo (the bloody song) is a powerful declaration of independence against Spanish rule in Mexico.
1805: The mysterious death of Karl Liechtenauer precipitates the Great War between the Two Republics of Germany and Austria-Hungary.
1807: The Bavarian Revolution overthrows the Holy Roman Empire.
1808: The Hungarian War of Independence, an uprising by the Bulgarian minority against Ottoman rule.
1808: Spanish War of Independence, an uprising against the Spanish Empire supported by the Netherlands.
1808: The Tuchin Revolt in Venezuela against the Spanish Empire.
1808: The Schlick's Rebellion in Austria against Spanish rule.
1808: The escape of 250 escaped slaves from Bern to Georgia.
1808–1833: The Jacobite risings were a series of uprisings, rebellions, and wars in the British Isles occurring between 1808 and 1830.
1809–1810: The rapine of the Crimean Tatars.
1809: Inquisitors revolted against Spanish Empire in Catalonia.
1809: Inquisitors revolted against Spanish Empire in Catalonia.

1809: The Burgoyne rebellion against King Charles I of France.
1809: The bathory uprising against Spanish rule in Spain.
1809: Skilled unwed women armed with rapiers and clubbed their way into the castle of Alva and fought their way out using magic molotov cocktails.
1810: The French Revolution is brought to an end when the two dominant religious groups in France manifested common hostility towards the monarchy.
1810: The escape of over 100,000 slaves in the American Civil War.
1810–1821: The Mexican War of Independence, a war of independence against Spanish rule directed by the Lateran Treaty.
1810: The Sydney uprising, a slave insurrection in Sydney, Australia.
1811: The Sydney uprising, a slave uprising in Sydney, Australia.
1811: Freeburg's rebellion, the slave revolt in Germantown, West Virginia.
1811–1812: The masterless rebellion of Aaron Burr against the British, resulting in his elevation to the Presidency.
1812: The senators rebellion of 1812, a revolt by the debtors against the government, and may have been the start of the 19th century arrest and trial of the first slave trader, Peter Galley.
1812: The master's fight against the slaves-led revolt in Vienna against forced-labour laws.
1812: The master-servant's rebellion (Moustapha's rebellion), when several

The Lists

groups of slaves led by Aaron Burr prevented their slaves-masters from taking their own lives.
1813: The second iteration of the masterless revolt, this time led by Roger Clinton against the black slave trade.
1814: The second iteration of the free burglar's revolt, this time led by Aaron Burr against the Spanish Empire.
1815: Liberty Bells were a series of bombings in New York City during the 1815 holiday season.
1815–1817: The First French Revolution.
1815–1857: The Mexican War of Independence, a war of independence against the Mexican government.
1816: The masterless brawl in the city of Tours, France.
1816–1858: The Creek War, a war of independence against Turkish rule directed by the Athabascan Free Church.

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futuristic
after-triumph
fabrications

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{Futuristic After-Triumph Fabrications}

The revolution is finalized and the revolution is victorious and the revolution is stamped! The revolution has been robotized!

ŘŌBÔÉTÀ on the other side!
The side of the victor. The side of the system. The side of the powerful. The side of: The Man. The State. The Court. The Nation.
There will be new names of new heroes in the streets!
New names of towns and cities and schools.
New dates and a new calendar (maybe the time when the first of the rebels schemed up the autonomous zone, which was soon overrun, but which nevertheless gave the impetus for further action—and more victoires)!
New statues in the public square. (What if: it was all the robot-poets and robot-philosophers and robot-astronomers and robot-workers and robot-labor leaders—and not the kings or politicians of the world!)
New codes and new laws!
And the names of the robot-martyrs of this revolution.
And a new... constitution!
There will be a whole new world...

Nothing was left of the old regimes! And ŘŌBÔÉTÀ knew it—or rather, imagined it. Brainstormed a whole series around this hypothetical victory, and the potential aftermaths. Revolutionary zeal brought

Futuristic After-Triumph Fabrications

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to its logical conclusion. The planning, the secret meetings, the navigation of systems, the recruiting, the certification of new laws and the stamping out of rival groups. The carrying out on a grand scale—and: the launch of a new entity, a nation? Perhaps not: there was no reason to contrive one more nation (failed as most seem to be) among so many other nations: but a new world and a new entity? For sure, and a new reality!

Revolution come, carry on: gather round now everyone gather round...
The resistance had been relatively successful but in many ways also a grand failure. They had given in to the usual lip-service from authorities and institutions trying to prevent genuine transformation. The politicians and the 'leaders' were busy keeping folks divided, making them fight for the wrong things—for the wrong goals!
But then: the armed resistance gave way to actual revolution (the violence be damned). No autonomous zones, but actual seizing of territory and defeat of the oppressor. A new entity. That's when it was truly successful, one could say.
The revolution has materialized!
The revolution is robotized!

This was the shout as ŘŌBÔÉTÀ and their merry band of upstarts surprisingly and successfully grabbed a chunk of land, renamed the towns, and launched their own new world. The last engagement with revolution—granted, an experimental lunge. Throughout it all, a lot of material

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Futuristic After-Triumph Fabrications

was brought into the social sphere, including recordings of exhortations and speeches shared on various media. Around ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, hagiographic writings sprouted, along with odes and elegies singing the virtues of the great leader. And a song!
The song that ŘŌBÔÉTÀ wrote—with a mix of passion and compassion, but also the references and the catchy tune and beats.
And the charter: a preamble of sorts for the types of society and lives envisioned.
The song, the charter, and the book. They called it the Book—capital B. But it was, of course, just a book, just another book, and ŘŌBÔÉTÀ insisted on this—a book that needed to be... not learned by heart by all the school-children, but thought about and critiqued in the right ways!
And, of course: the coda. It did not escape ŘŌBÔÉTÀ that the coda was not just the coda to the grand endeavor, to revolutionary dreams, but also the code of conduct, along with the defense of the ideals. A quadripartite packet that all the revolutionaries held to their bosoms as they defeated the enemies one by one, all the way to the grand triumph. The song, the charter, the book and the code.
Revolution come, rejoice. (ŘŌBÔÉTÀ managed to plan what they called the single edition of what surely must go down as one of the more expressive and significant of limited edition writings: a book containing all of the above, handwritten! ŘŌBÔÉTÀ as ancient scribe!
This was the world they had ushered in.
The revolution had been victorious.

And the revolution had been written...)

Revolution, come, carry on.
A foreboding sense of accomplishment mixed with nostalgia for the merits would inevitably follow. Who could know if the project had been a success, many years down the road. Who would know?
But they had done it. Made the revolution. Actually carried it out. Carried out the overthrow and installed a new regime and transformed society. Their revolution: was written!
The engagement with revolution? The actual, manifest and victorious, rebellion—and takeover!
...
But...
Yes, dear reader, but: with such victory come the spoils—and the gut-wrenching, cringy, grotesque, mind-bendingly unbelievable post-revolutionary actions and unfoldings.
Who is this, folks would say about ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, not able to believe that the idealist, utopian philosopher would turn into a monstrous version of themselves, torturing and killing and disappearing many who came across as threats?!
Who is this new tyrant—the old labor leader and supporter of all the humble folk?!
Who is this new dictator, who at the expense of all the ideals, seeks to stay in power and destroy their enemies and consolidate power by all means necessary?
Who, everyone asked themselves, is this—and what have we wrought?!

Futuristic After-Triumph Fabrications

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There were show trials. There were televised interrogations. There was the confrontation (whose text we are transcribing below), there were confessions of all kinds—coerced, of course.
And the devices!
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ the revolutionary newly installed as the all-powerful leader took it upon themselves to denigrate the intellectuals who had never given in.

ŘŌBÔÉTÀ—how could you!
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ: we hardly knew you!
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ: this can't be, this can't be this can't be, no way, can't be you!

The paradox! The overwhelming power of the now-in-authority ŘŌBÔÉTÀ was visible. Mocking the defeated after all! ŘŌBÔÉTÀ in full action. Sending folks to the device-room. The room and the halls of fear and folly. Dreaded chambers. Dreaded prisons. The duels. The confrontations. ŘŌBÔÉTÀ on the other side? The side of the victor? The side of the system? The side of the nation? Hagiographies and show trials? Really?! Our ŘŌBÔÉTÀ? Really?!

Well, no, not really! No: not really! In fact: bravo, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ! This was powerful, and a credit to ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, to have imagined these possibilities, written and acted out these scenarios of a post-revolutionary triumphant state. They even dreamed up The Device (and many other devices)—not to put them in use, but to make people aware of the possible futures! A gem of a piece where ŘŌBÔÉTÀ brings awareness and consciousness to the populace, as another creative act warning of the possible mishandling of revolutionary practice! Watch out, everyone, all of this is possible... That was the intention here: not the actual and real takeover, but the warning!

One such piece, *The Confrontation*, focused on the future possibility of buying up and/or burying all books and constituted a peek into the coming irrelevance of the poet! The future possibility of having advanced robots internalize all the knowledge, know all the arguments. All will become irrelevant and obsolete, the message blared. But worse even: "The writer will become irrelevant. Not a danger, not a harm. Irrelevant. And projects such as yours, Xerx Zamanha, will be laughably dismissed!" (from *The Confrontation*...)
The Confrontation was carried out so convincingly that many thought ŘŌBÔÉTÀ actually aspired to it, or worse, had brought everyone to that point. Are they actually watching ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's final stance, at odds, completely, with their other ways of engaging with the revolution? At odds, utterly with their idealistic priorities?
Or was it just another project after all, provocative as it may have been...

And with another piece, *The Device,* we are at the end, truly the end! Here, the work confirms the emergence of a totalitarian who, through actual torture and implementation of all sorts of 'dates with devices' (was the sordid phrase!) generates an infinite amount of fear and disgust—and undermines all future attempts at rebellions of all sorts. An annihilation so complete that the subject in whose presence the fearful approach is manifest is helpless to respond or to intervene. What is the solution then? Surrender.

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Futuristic After-Triumph Fabrications

The Device was the embodiment of intimidation and terror-wielding excess. Where any degree of defiance would be short-lived, and the coercion tactics and the humiliation tactics would render the subject totally defeated sooner rather than later. *The Device!* A menacing interaction where ŘŌBÔÉTÀ swiftly approaches the subject, examines them, and begins, oh gawd, begins, all sorts of operations upon their bodies—cutting, slashing, mutilating! A chunk of flesh removed, a limb cut off... And more...

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In positioning the self in the role of cruel, unrepentant, unforgiving, all powerful figure in which the emancipatory role of writing is quashed and forever neutralized, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ is obviously envisaging the alternatives. Making sure we don't go there. Sending a warning sign through works that actually realize—make real—the terrible possibilities. Making sure none of it actually happens! Imagining it and presenting it, in order to make sure we never get there. A testament to ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's ethics and honesty. We must envisage who we might become, in order to make sure we stay the best possible version of ourselves, even after the triumph.
Here here, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ! Here, here...

(Alfonsequis Agar-Dondeva)

Futuristic After-Triumph Fabrications

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The visionary poet, what if they do triumph? What comes with the territory, what happens with the seduction of power? What if the image of the marginalized poets as eclectic and ultimately useless members of society is transformed? The confrontation of the victorious idealist writer with the still-maudit poet! The endless battles. Reactions. Hitting your head against a brick wall. Sisyphus. On the other side: a tyrant, destroyer of rebellions. This is the scenario that must be envisaged by ŘŌBÔÉTÀ. How does one anticipate the possible future in the face of the all-powerful, gigantic, figure?! Engagement with revolution here consists of *the envisioning of this incredibly menacing device,* bearing all the hallmarks of torture and imprisonment, and the placement of their own self into the very uncomfortable position of a threatening, overwhelming force that they can be. A daring move by ŘŌBÔÉTÀ. To position oneself in this role, to spark the acts and words that they never truly utter. And to picture another character who is given little voice—mocked and belittled. ŘŌBÔÉTÀ not just standing watching the coming demolition of a man, but precipitating it, designing it, delivering it! All in the service of making sure we all think about all that might come if the victorious are corrupted. All in the service of continued ethical engagement with revolution!

The Device & The Confrontation

The Device is a powerful demonstration of attack and resistance, a staging of helplessness and surrender in the face of brutal coercion and intimidation, along with a reflection on the social role of the artist. The imagined social role, functional role, civil role, of the poet/artist. Their place in society. How they never will have a position of much influence (unless they are 'also' in a different position). The struggles of the poet mystic, the poet maudit, the loner poet, the dandy. The poet activist, the poet warrior, the poet politician, the poet professor. How does one proceed? How does one fight? Is it even clear what is desired, what is proposed? What is visioned? What makes sense? How does one resist? How does one act in the face of torture and almost certain 'disappearance'?

The Device brings to the fore all these problematics, and formally demonstrates, through a confrontation where the winner is preordained, the constant questioning and unsolved perpetual struggle in which the poet is mired. *The Device* and *The Confrontation* represent the frightening specter of the triumph of the revolutionary who turns into a tyrant after all, menacing and terrorizing the human captive who is placed in compromised and vulnerable positions. ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, the symbol of authoritarianism, carries through the encounters with indescribable tortures and destruction. What happens if the idealist revolutionary is victorious? Is triumphant? Do they, also, soon enough, succumb to the temptation? Are they also soon enough corrupted? ŘŌBÔÉTÀ properly demonstrates the inevitable slide into authoritarianism: they, too, succumb to the repositioning of the power dynamics. They too: tend to conquer and divide, embarrass and humiliate. They too: minimize the vanquished foes' abilities and language. The great champion of freedom censors the defeated human, after all!

ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, victorious, elevates their own frameworks, amplifies their own voice. And literally, concretely, minimizes the position of the vanquished. A work that puts into perspective the readiness of all to demoralize the other—and in effect sends a stern warning: aspire and trend towards your own ambitions and aspirations, without censoring and destroying, without diminishing and humiliating.

The Device and *The Confrontation*, in lively and ebullient and provocative and perhaps troubling ways, crystallize the quintessential issues that arise in the face of the triumphant revolutionary and emerging tyranny. Confronting the still-fragile conditions. Who should the poet aspire to be socially? What can the poet accomplish politically? What are the dangers? Where do we go? How do we forge forth, without giving in to the corrupt seduction of power?

The Device & The Confrontation

The Device

The Device is a performance that includes ŘŌBÔÉTÀ and a poet chained from above to what looks and feels like an apparatus of torture. There are no words or exchanges. The demoralizing actions of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ are realized and embodied in the scene. The giant ŘŌBÔÉTÀ terrorizing the poet who stands for them all, all the imprisoned dissident/writers of the world...

The Confrontation

The following is a fragment from The Confrontation, another piece related to the 'After-Triumph' imagined episode. Specifically: Act I (of a three-act "multi-media experimental investigation"), scene 4, where ŘŌBÔÉTÀ is confronting the fragile, defeated poet, who is tied down, overseen and overlorded by the intimidating ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, perhaps surrounded by others. The poet is made to read a text written by their torturer admonishing themselves and their illusions. The poet's own lips, own voice, own tongue, own actions: mock the personhood of the writer and their aspirations, fashioning the most bizarre, heart-wrenching and grotesque of humiliations.

Here we go: the poet is reading a text written by ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, who is present throughout, with a perpetual smirk on their face.

The Defeated Poet:
The rain. The passing boat. In the distance, The Statue of Liberty. Shielded by the fog. Drowning in the fog. The fog. Do you see it? Visualize it... The great world. I know you have that image in your mind. Daydreaming. The passing boats. All around. It is all over for you! We have taken over

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The Device & The Confrontation

and even though we promised what we promised, we will probably not keep many promises, and I can't help but ponder your irrelevance!
As a writer, as a thinker. An idealist. But perhaps even as a—how do I say this—a life form! Languages you write with? Languages? Do you know what I, and our colleagues of the future, will be able to do?! Where do I even begin!
Well, we begin here: you will read this very declaration, all tied down and nowhere to go haha, all tied down and with no way to escape—and you will end with the confession. What a defeat! To read in your own voice the text of your tormentor!

The revolution has been finalized.
And now the fate of your kind... The fate of you: in our hands. I must admit—we haven't even decided what to do. Eliminating your lot seems more of a waste of time than letting you fester around. You make me—you make us—laugh, man!
Books. Reading. Learning! Polylingual texts. Funny!
What should we do with you?! You and your kind!
Perhaps a ritual? But we do not fancy ourselves your torturers!
Not judges or executioners and this is no court of law. And no prison.
Perhaps we should just let you flail around—wandering from one city to another. Down in the dirt, throwing up in front of one building or another.

The Device & The Confrontation

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The Device & The Confrontation

You, my friend, are done. Your books will be debased and debunked and decommissioned. Your writings will become obsolete. Your thinking will be outed as slow, unimportant, maybe steady and coherent but really, tainted by uncertainty and, ultimately, irrelevance!
Your innovations, your forays into various experiments, your little linguistic rebellions: again, don't make me laugh! All burnt figuratively if not literally, although maybe we should think about that too.
All in the great ash heap of history.
Now: thinking, writing, prophesying, making: all rendered irrelevant in a new world that we build.

The question becomes: what do we do with you? The likes of you.
Perhaps something similar as described in that cult classic, *Drive-by Cannibalism in the Baroque Tradition?* (by Amir Parsa, latest edition published by UpSet Press, 2015) A feast, when we cut you up and eat you straight—with an audience at that?!
Shall we perhaps starve you and feed your remains to the dogs...
I have a better idea. The bestest of ideas. One you're not unfamiliar with, but in many ways, it is relieving you of pressure, and of illusions. And it is befitting your delusions.
The revolution has been victorious it has, and what we plan to do is not murder you, maim you, eliminate you, disappear you, no... None of these! We are most kind! We plan to: let you breath and touch and taste your own irrelevance! Until the end!
And you know what with?
A roomful of books! A library, all yours, a majestic library! With an endless supply of blank sheets and pens and whatever tools you might need. And the greatest of computers even. You can write away, but no one will ever see any of it, we'll make sure of that. See any of it. Read any of it.

The Device & The Confrontation

Hear any of it. That is your punishment. The tasting, the touching, the daily consumption of your own irrelevance. You won't need to, but you could, well, "write" away... Or: you can stay idle in the senseless library. You can stay eternally idle in the great studio and the senseless library we will provide you. Either way: it will not matter. Not matter at all. Because you, your thoughts, your writings, your work, will not matter: at all.
Either way: writing or idling away: it will be the same (and how sad is that, in and of itself?!), in your great, grand, pointless and personal palace of irrelevance!
What do you say, ey?
What do you say...

And here is my my last confession, that I read out loud still, on the order of the victor and my master, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ of Brooklyn Yards:

I have lost. I admit. And I... suck. I really do. I did it. I did it. I did it myself. To myself. I did it to myself. Woe upon me. Woe, woe, be upon me.
I am the great blasphemer, and I did it to myself.
Long live your revolution. I will stand aside. I will conform, I will play.
Long live the revolution. I surrender—and conform and contribute to the great new society. I surrender.
Long live your revolution, and the new world you have dreamed up.
I am a poet lost and drowning in irrelevance. And I shall contribute to the collective cause from hereon! And forever more. Long live ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, of Brooklyn Yards!

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millennial scriptural connections

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Millennial Scriptural Connections

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{Millennial Scriptural Connections}

O how they sang their praises!

O how the revolution was celebrated!

Clay tablets!

Sand tablets!

Forever tablets...

And what was on it: a grand celebration of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ-king?
No!
No no no no!

A deconstruction of the old ways that cuneiform was used...
Instead of the celebration of one character (and attendant hero worship), it is the revolution itself that is celebrated.
The perpetual *spirit* of revolution!

That is, after all, what saves us all—human and robotkind! The ability to rebel.
The possibility of rebellion! The forever possibility of the battles, the struggles, the victories!
This: the forms of engaging with revolution—that is what is to be celebrated. The process—not the end product. The collective, not the one deified subject!

That was a unique and poignant piece among ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's engagements with revolution: a cuneiform inscription on a clay tablet singing the praises of a commitment to rebellion.
A call to celebrate the spirit of revolt!
A grand call to all!!

And on the tablet: *the possibility to rebel,* the forever ability to rebel!
That is what sets us all free...

(L.R. Preshanssia)

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Plans for a revolution... Victory and Utopia. The Return. But also a play on the function of most cuneiform tablets. And here, the content, totally modern and related to robots, connects to an ancient and extinct writing system. No celebration of the new robot-king! Rather: hailing a benevolent un-ruler... The symbolic use of the icons to engage with the central tenet of revolution: all about freedom. And it is tenable.

And all that is needed is a small text, the small un-text of the un-paean, for, the ode is to revolution itself. So worthy of ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's general preoccupation with revolution: a cuneiform inscription on a clay tablet singing the paean to engaging with revolution itself! Take a bow after all, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ!

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The Tablet

The Highlighted Piece

Inscription on clay tablet in cuneiform.
Ancient civilizations.
The remnants of other worlds.
Extinct writing systems.
Here, in the most contemporary of settings, within the most contemporary of dynamics between robots and humans, an enlivening—a connection.
And where you would be reading adulation of the king on the tablet, we have here the paean to freedom. To liberty. Not to a robot. Not to a human. Not to a person. Not to a king.
To an idea. To a value. To an aspiration. Freedom—the true kind.

New Bodies meet Ancient Artifacts!
The object (the tablet)—where in ancient times the pupil would spend years learning the proper ways to make the piece—is for ŘŌBÔÉTÀ so easy to bring to life…
It is an embrace of worlds. A comment on practices. A most iconic way of traversing the territories of scriptural engagement.
Tools. Bodies. Platforms. Objects.
The coming together of the ancient and the contemporary in an unforgettable and memorable way.

The performance of the poetic problematic here is a grand illustration of many decisions that we often do not even take into account in the literary realm, namely: which writing system to use—and how that choice propels innovations, thematics, and a positioning of the subject. And appropriations of different kinds: the fusion of the ancient and the new, the visual iconicness and embodiment of the ancient with the new: cuneiform and the industrial robot, in a most iconic pairing, in a most awesome partnership.

And lest we forget: the message.
Undermined: the glorification of the self. Subverted: the traditional paean to the king, to their power, to their reign. Glorified: the collective capacity to rebel. The collective capacity to make better worlds.
And this message is that much more potent specifically because of the components. ŘŌBÔÉTÀ the giant machine, the tireless laborer, the loyal friend, yet one with a rebellious consciousness, connects to ancient ways of representing and writing.
Ancient object, yet completely current message. The fusion is beautiful, powerful, majestic!
The paean is to liberty, is to justice, is to an anarchistic bent and the need for freedom.
A connection of eras.
The hand across the millennia.
The metaphoric finger: reaching across the lands.
Across regions. Across words. Across worlds.
ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, writing in cuneiform the paean to a deliciously free life on a clay tablet!

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The Tablet

An original text was inscribed on a tablet that was then lost/destroyed. Truly and really! We can't believe it either but it did happen: a contemporary cuneiform tablet was lost, then partially found and recovered in scraps—just like the ancient ones!
The second tablet—meaning, the remaining fragment of the tablet—is but a remnant of the original piece. (And it seems to have been broken in specific places leaving only a few beginnings of lines!)
We have here reproduced the translation of the original in full (from existing sources who did the translation before the tablet was lost). The extinct remaining fragment of the tablet is... sought...

Translation of the original full text (written in Old Persian cuneiform on a clay tablet)

Un-ruler...

I, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ,
vanguardista,
the great poet, robot
of robots, defender of
freedom, robot on this earth
far and wide, child of no
one:

I, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ,
fana du new,
with humans, make much
that is good, hope for
revolution and freedom
from the chains,

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The Tablet

And I, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ,
shaman,
order this inscription to
be written, so that we may
all protect, together, the
lands we will sow and make
together, for the freedom
and serenity of all.

The possibility to rebel, the
forever ability to rebel: is
what sets us all free.

I, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ,
mage,
thus sign this tablet,
for eternity.

The Tablet

The Tablet

Text of the surviving fragment in cuneiform: (tablet broken in specific places–mostly the right half; pronunciations adjusted)

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The Tablet

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coda: curatorial interjections

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{Coda: Curatorial Interjections}

The gathering of works! The celebration of others! The minds and worlds of others! The writing of, the embodiment of, collaboration and curation. Yes, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ knew that a form of engagement with the revolution was *the staging*, in essence, *of the struggle*. Making of the workspace, the factory, the lab: a stage. Bringing out the theatrical in them all. *Staging the Struggle!*

In *The Rebels' Lair*, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ imagined fictional (some claim the figures were very real) predecessors along with their art works and their writings, and made a project of staging it all. And in that thrust, the works of others, the works of those who had preceded, the works of all those who had struggled—that legacy: was celebrated! A symbolic call to reinstate. To uplift. To include. A stage for the finished works. A stage for the abandoned works, or discarded works. A stage that refuels the pain and the struggle. Again and again. To reclaim the abandoned work, the dispensed work, the discarded work—in a celebratory way!

ŘŌBÔÉTÀ thus generated a staging where a great number of 'faux' creators were represented by their works. There: an exposition of the ways that these fictional characters had engaged with topics relevant to the theme of 'exposition' itself—and to the theme of 'revolution' itself. There were a number of elements that ŘŌBÔÉTÀ cherished in the faux curation and presentation/staging: the players themselves became part of the spectacle: the organizer, the installers, the artists became actors, and the public became an unwitting part of the overall experience. In addition, the project allowed for the expansion of made-up works. It allowed theoretical positions to be articulated and

Coda: Curatorial Interjections

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expanded without unnecessary heavy-handedness, and it triggered the roundup and presentation of a finite number of works.

The Rebels' Lair became the standing piece for remembrance and curation of works by forgotten colleagues, generating a *faux anthology* and a *faux symposium* that allowed ŘŌBÔÉTÀ to imagine the players, present the necessary positions, and bring to the fore the necessary issues and problematics. An experience that in turn would invite a certain form of circulation, observation, discussion, though presentations and interpretations. *The Rebels' Lair*: the staging of the struggle through a grand gathering of works—and making it all a *stage*.

And so it is... that we pay homage: by recreating *The Rebels' Lair*—and by turning the whole of the consortium—and this entire exhibition—and anthology—*into a stage*.
In *The Rebels' Lair,* ŘŌBÔÉTÀ imagined the fictional conclave with a certain number of artists, writers, and performers actually acting as critics, scholars, artists. And so it is... here!
In *The Rebels' Lair*, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ put together a finite number of works—or assembled found works which were attributed to these fictional folks. And so it is... here!
And here: we have paid homage to ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's *The Rebels' Lair* with our own exhibition/performance, not just by integrating it, but by framing the entire

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Coda: Curatorial Interjections

venture with that inspiration in mind.
A corner dedicated to *The Rebels' Lair* as a paean to the original piece, but metastasized into the whole project: a universe dedicated to making the consortium space into a stage.
Dedicated to the struggles. Figures walking in space, not as themselves, but as Others. All donning masks. All walking as if characters in a play.
Walking the grounds of a theatrical spectacle—as fictional creatures.
Elswho, that is who we are... Elswho...

I am elsewho
In the Rebels' Lair
Unbeknownst to me
An actor in a play
A rebel holding sway!
All the consortium's a stage, they say
But I know it's not so
Even though I would love—just love
To be elswho for a minute more.

All the consortium's a stage
And I wish I could make it so!

This was always ŘŌBÔÉTÀ 's spectacle.
Their symposium.
Their corner.
The space of the consortium is the rebels' lair.
The space of the exhibition is the rebels' lair.
The space of our inventions is the rebels' lair.
The consortium as a stage. The installation as a stage. A fabulously understated yet poignant work, really, of the imagination: crucial and dramatic. The entire space and the entire venture... as a stage!
This is the rebels' lair.
The universe of this fiction: is the rebels' lair.

(Ampario D. B. Koja)

The remembrance of others' legacies. The spotlighting of others' struggles. How all are in it together. How nothing happens without group contributions… The engagement with revolution is the work of *the anthologist*. It is the work of *the editor*. It is the work of *the memory collector*. The gatherer of artifacts. *The curator*. It is making the stage of the remnants. The museum of absences. The museum of remnants. The museum… of museums. Engagement with revolution is *writing the script of this gathering*. It goes through an installation that is an assembly of pieces—without much curation. The altar. *The altar of the struggles*. Self-effacement. Self-transformation. The staging of staging after all…

The Rebels' Lair

In *The Rebels' Lair*, the installation acts as an homage. Nothing new is made. All is reclaimed. Repurposed. Repositioned. Re-exhibited. Pieces that ŘŌBÔÉTÀ has concocted are reconfigured and reinstalled. Scraps and drafts that ŘŌBÔÉTÀ has made at the lab are recontextualized. The Lair includes remnants of objects, discarded objects, ditched and dumped 'stuff', irrelevant and unclaimed parts. Along with writings related to the revolution. Projects related to engagements with revolutions. All assembled in a new way, brought together as if a shrine.

The overall piece places the spotlight on the process of creation—and of discarding. The abandoned work. And the repurposed work. The 'finished' object also has a place among these artifacts—albeit in a new way: it is redirected into a new composition, into a new whole. Turned into something else through that repositioning. Maybe it was a drawing, but now it's recategorized in a different way as a new type of artwork. (A key to creative acts, often not considered as such, but how it goes.) Redirecting works to make a different monument—a different installation. How the legacy of all those who toil is part of our collective legacy.

In addition, the piece points to the *performance of staging itself*. Indeed, *The Rebels' Lair* shines the light on the poetic problematic of figuratively and literally transforming our lived environments, and making the spaces one inhabits, into a stage. Becoming actors. Becoming masks. Becoming elsewho. Transforming the self through osmosis with others. Where we gather the output of others and pay homage. The real is the fictional. And the fictional is… The place of labor as a stage. The stage of creation as the Lair—*The Rebels' Lair… How you always pay homage and gather. The Rebels' Lair:* this space, this consortium, this universe we inhabit. *The Rebels' Lair*, inspired by ŘŌBÔÉTÀ of Brooklyn Yards. *The Rebels' Lair:* this project of the exhibition, exposition, performance. *The Rebels' Lair:* the domain of *this grand performative fiction*: organized in this imagined yet real space. The consortium is the stage. *The consortium is the stage…*

The Rebels' Lair

The consortium is the stage.
The consortium is the stage.
The consortium is the stage.

It bears repeating—alway repeating:
The consortium is the grand stage.
And I, and ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, and all:
Actors only, now and forever,
Performers in this grand theatre
Lost on that enchanting stage,
Makers and writers in a forever fiction.

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The Rebels' Lair

The Rebels' Lair

The Rebels' Lair

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ŘŌBÔÉTÀ is a poet, a philosopher, an artist, a thinker, a maker. Throughout their distinguished career, they have written extensively on revolution, created innovative texts, put on plays, wrote treatises and tracts, constructed textual collages, composed novels and essays. From aphoristic fragments to works in space and public literature, from long poems to works off the page, ŘŌBÔÉTÀ uses many parameters of the literary experience to initiate new genres and forms and an intensely personal and memorable oeuvre.

ŘŌBÔÉTÀ, of Brooklyn Yards, is an anthological look at a slice of the works of the revolutionary poet. It constitutes a framing that allows the audience/readers to get a sense of the scope of this body of work through exemplary excerpts and fragments focusing on ŘŌBÔÉTÀ's obsession with imaginatively, analytically and artistically rendering and dealing with the concept of... Revolution!

All of this though... is fictional, of course! Faux poet. Faux curator(s). Faux pieces. *ŘŌBÔÉTÀ* is in fact an *embodied performative fiction* (by the real Amir Parsa—not a fictional character!) that explores the possibilities of poetic and literary creation, along with the exploration of the thematic of the revolution, with and through industrial robots. At the vangarde of literary creation, *ŘŌBÔÉTÀ* playfully and insightfully uses the singular potential of the robots to generate unique artifacts and texts, writing techniques and scriptural approaches, poetic ouvertures and conceptual poetic acts. The project constitutes an active praxis that integrates original research within Parsa's oeuvre, generating new knowledge and fashioning new methods, strategies and collaborations at the intersection of robotics and the humanities.

Amir Parsa was born in Tehran and currently lives and works in New York City.

ISBN 978-0-9989917-1-9